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Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California
Berkeley, California

California Historical Society
San Francisco, California

California Historical Society Oral History Series

A. Jess Shenson, M.D.

DRS. BEN AND A. JESS SHENSON: OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SERVICE
TO SAN FRANCISCO IN MEDICINE, MUSIC, AND ART

With Introductions by
Eugene A. Bauer, M.D.
Michael McCone
Nancy Bechtle
Reid Dennis

Interviews Conducted by
Caroline Crawford
in 1997

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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Drs. A. Jess and Ben Shenson in 1995.

Cataloging information

SHENSON, A. Jess, M.D. (b. 1921)

Medical doctor and philanthropist

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Family background and early years; the Shenson brothers and kosher markets in San Francisco in the 1880s; I. Shainin and Company; the life and work of California painter Theodore Wores, his works in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the White House and Blair House, Washington, D.C., the National Museum of American Art, Stanford University, the Honolulu Academy of Art, the Triton Museum; Stanford University and Medical School in the 1940s; practicing medicine in San Francisco and at St. Francis Hospital, 1948 to the present; Mae Helene Boggs and *My Playhouse* was a *Stagecoach*; Shenson family involvement with and support of the California Historical Society, the Merola Opera Program, San Francisco Opera and Symphony, San Francisco and Asian Youth Orchestras, museums, scholarships and support funds for young artists; thoughts on travel, medical practice and civic responsibility.

Introductions by Eugene A. Bauer, M.D., Stanford University School of Medicine; Michael McCone, Director, California Historical Society; Nancy Bechtle, President, Board of Governors, San Francisco Symphony; and Reid W. Dennis, Chairman, San Francisco Opera Association.

Interviews conducted by Caroline Cooley Crawford in 1997 for the California Historical Society Oral History series, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

TABLE OF CONTENTS--A. Jess Shenson, M.D.

PREFACE by Michael McCone	i
INTRODUCTION by Eugene A. Bauer, M.D.	ii
INTRODUCTION by Michael McCone	iii
INTRODUCTION by Nancy Bechtle	iv
INTRODUCTION by Reid W. Dennis	v
INTERVIEW HISTORY	vi
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION	viii
I EARLY FAMILY HISTORY	1
From Russia to San Francisco: Aaron and Fanny Shenson	1
The Shenson Markets: 1880s to 1930s	4
Rose and Louis Shenson	7
A Farm in Vacaville	8
Family Homes	9
I. Shainin and Company	12
Shopping and Cooking: Family Pastimes	16
Life in the Depression	18
Schools, Music and Other Family Activities	20
San Francisco Families and Associations	25
Major Influences	26
II THE WORK OF THEODORE WORES AND SHENSON PATRONAGE	28
Theodore Wores and Carrie Wores	28
Rose Shenson and Carrie Wores: A Close Relationship	29
Restoring and Exhibiting Wores' Work: 1968	30
Charles Gould of the <u>S.F. Examiner</u> and the Resurrection of Wores' Work	32
The Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara and a Traveling Exhibit	33
Wores' Early Years--Studies in Munich: 1875	36
Living and Painting in Japan: 1885-1888	38
Theodore and the Art of Portraiture	40
Promoting Theodore Wores' Work and Traveling with Rose Shenson	42
Acquiring "The Chinese Fishmonger": 1968	44
Finding and Purchasing "A Rural Village": 1970	45
Finding "A Japanese House, Nikko, Japan": 1976	47
Dr. William Gerdts, Clement Conger and the White House: 1972	50
Museum Acquisitions--The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Wores' "Street in Ikaō": 1973	54
An Exhibit in Japan and Lizzie Victor and "The Lei Maker" Find a Home in Hawaii: 1988	55
President Clinton Gives "The Iris Gardens" to Japan: 1995	59
The Hawaiian Exhibition of 1994	61

III	MEDICAL SCHOOL AND MEDICAL PRACTICE	62
	Choosing Stanford and Stanford Medical School	62
	Wartime Service at Camp White and in the Pacific: 1943-1945	67
	Coming Home to Stanford Medical School: 1945-1950	71
	Remembering the Medical School Faculty	74
	Medical Research in the 1950s	77
	Ben Shenson Establishes a Practice: 1948; Jess Shenson Joins Him: 1951	78
	Practicing at St. Francis Hospital	83
	The Changing Practice of Medicine: A Day in the Life of the Shensons	84
	Medical Meetings and Associations	88
	Longstanding Patients	91
	Office Staff	92
	A Special House on Washington Street	93
IV	A LONG INVOLVEMENT WITH THE MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM AND OTHER ASSOCIATIONS	101
	The Merola Program in the Early Years: The 1950s	101
	Major Developments	103
	Grand Finals Auditions	104
	Fundraising for the Program	105
	Creation of the S.F. Opera Center: Adler Fellows	107
	Sponsoring MOP Singers	109
	Chairing the San Francisco District Metropolitan Opera Auditions: 1971-1978	110
	The Performing Arts Library and Museum	116
	San Francisco Opera Board: 1992-1997	118
	Supporting the San Francisco Symphony: The 1987 Shenson Young Artist Debut Fund	120
	The Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund: 1977	125
	The San Francisco Youth Orchestra and Asian Youth Orchestra: 1987	125
V	TRAVELING THE WORLD	132
	First Travels in the Orient: 1954	132
	Trips to Europe, North Africa, Burma, India and Sri Lanka: 1956-1964	137
	Visiting Hawaii and Setting up the Wores Exhibit at the East West Center in Honolulu: 1970, 1971	139
	Travels with Ben Shenson: 1984	141
	Washington, D.C., New York, and a Birthday Party: 1985	143
	The Shanghai Conservatory: 1986	146
	Honored by Merola; A Temple Emanu-El Endowment; Thoughts About Giving: 1991	148
	Honored by the Hebrew Union College, 1992; Art Tours and a "Weak" in Provence, 1994	150
	Honored by the CHS: 1994	153
	The Last Holiday Letter--1996	154
	Looking Back on a Charmed Life	155
	TAPE GUIDE	157

APPENDIX

A	The Shenson family holiday letters: 1970 to 1997	158
B	"The Widow's Remarkable Gallery," <i>San Francisco Examiner</i> , November 12, 1967	188
C	"The Shensons Resurrect an Artist," <i>Stanford M.D.</i> , Summer/Fall, 1971	193
D	Distinguished Service Award of the Stanford Medical Alumni Association, presented to Dr. Jess Shenson on April 23, 1994	196
E	Remarks made by Dr. Albert Shumate and Dr. William Gerdts at a California Historical Society luncheon honoring Ben and Jess Shenson, November 1, 1994	197
F	Remarks entitled "The Doctors Shenson: Doing a Good Job Is Its Own Reward," April, 1995, in connection with the Shenson Award to honor outstanding St. Francis Hospital employees	205
G	Letter to Dr. Jess Shenson from President Clinton regarding the presentation of "Iris Garden, Hori-Kiri, Tokyo" to the Emperor and Empress of Japan, December 26, 1995	209
H	Invitation to and remarks by Rabbi Stephen S. Pearce at a memorial concert for Dr. Ben Shenson, Sunday, December 14, 1997	210
I	Participants of the Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund, the Merola Opera Program, 1977-1997; Shenson Young Artists, sponsored through San Francisco Performances, San Francisco Symphony and CAL Performances, 1987-1997	213
J	"Theodore Wores; Paintings from California to Japan," by Dr. William Gerdts, 1998	214
K	St. Francis Hospital's photographic portrait of the Drs. Shenson, April 1995	218
	INDEX	223

PREFACE by Michael McCone

History is the stories we tell, the songs we sing, and the letters we write, recording eyewitness testimony through memory and opinion about the people and events of our time. History enables us to know who we are, what communities we belong to, and how we relate one to another.

Oral history, what in this business of research, scholarship, and publication is called a "primary source," is the most valuable documentation an institution such as the California Historical Society can possess...and therefore the most valuable possession a people, a community, can gather unto itself.

The California Historical Society is dedicated to ensuring that the history of California and the West is kept alive and made accessible for the enlightenment and enjoyment of all.

To these ends, the Society collects, preserves, interprets, exhibits, and publishes material about the history of California and the West. The art collection contains paintings, works on paper, photographs, sculpture, and artifacts. The North Baker Research Library consists of books (dating from 1535), manuscripts, pamphlets, maps, posters, periodicals, and newspapers. The Society maintains a full schedule of exhibitions in its public galleries and its collections are housed in climate-controlled spaces. California History, the Society's quarterly journal, has been in continuous publication since 1922 and has served as a principal forum for historical information about California.

The California Historical Society is grateful to the Regional Oral History Office in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, for this collaborative effort to record the recollections of men and women prominent in their respective fields whose achievements, knowledge, and experience form a significant contribution to the history and progress of this astonishing state of California.

Michael McCone
Executive Director
California Historical Society

May 1998
San Francisco

INTRODUCTION by Eugene A. Bauer, M.D.

Ben and Jess Shenson attended Stanford as undergraduates and as medical students, and remained active in Stanford affairs throughout their medical careers. They received their medical degrees in 1940 and 1950, respectively, and practiced internal medicine together in the same medical building at 450 Sutter Street for more than forty years. Ben and Jess served on Stanford's clinical faculty when the medical school was located in San Francisco, and their faculty appointments continued after the school's move to Palo Alto in 1959.

In 1950, at the time of the death of their father Louis Shenson, the brothers established a fund in his memory to assist meritorious students at Stanford Medical School, which was renamed the Louis and Rose Shenson Memorial Loan Fund after the death of their mother. In 1985, Ben and Jess offered another generous gesture of support to the medical school with the establishment of a visiting professorship in clinical medicine. This professorship brings an outstanding clinical professor to Stanford each year to help reaffirm the importance of the clinician-teacher in today's increasingly complex medical environment. And in 1996, following Ben's death, Jess Shenson endowed a student society to encourage Stanford physicians-in-training to go into careers in internal medicine or primary care.

Given their long history of support of Stanford Medical School, it is not surprising that the Stanford Medical Alumni Association honored both Shensons with its Distinguished Service Award in 1995. Together, Ben and Jess Shenson helped build and sustain Stanford Medical School's tradition of excellence, and their accomplishments have set the standards for literally hundreds of Stanford medical students and alumni who followed them.

Eugene A. Bauer, M.D.
Stanford University School of Medicine

April 1998
Stanford, California

INTRODUCTION by Michael McCone

It is an extraordinary honor for me to be asked by Jess to contribute an introduction and to that end I have labored to find good words for a great man.

"There is not a day goes by that I do not think of Ben."

That is Jess Shenson speaking of his brother, Ben, who died on August 15, 1995. Ben and Jess, Jess and Ben, a dynamic duo whose skills healed so many, whose generosities are countless, whose interest in others quite unbounded, whose love of history and the arts unmatched, and whose friends are legion...

The pages of this volume are filled with the remarkable story of the Shenson family, from Russia to San Francisco, a story of love, hard work, dedication, and a wide, wonderful, generous view of the world. In reading it, one hears the sound not only of the human voice but of the human spirit as well.

The story was to be told by Ben. "He was so much better at this sort of thing," said Jess one day. At first painfully and with some struggle, it was taken up by Jess. The warmth and depth of the story...its grandeur...told by Jess but with Ben close by, is a joy to read for pure pleasure. For the historian, it is a treasure.

Jess has done his work with great distinction and how thankful we all are for that.

Michael McCone
Executive Director, California
Historical Society

March 1998
San Francisco

INTRODUCTION by Nancy Bechtle

Ben and Jess Shenson were like two peas in a pod. They were inseparable in their work as in their leisure time. One couldn't really call this spare time "leisure," as they had more energy than any teenager and every moment of it was taken up with travel, concerts, medicine, and friends.

Their lives were ruled by two passions, healing and the arts. They were committed to the compassionate care of patients and at the same time surrounded themselves with great music and beautiful art objects.

Every year one would see on programs presented by the San Francisco Symphony, the San Francisco Opera, Stanford University, and Temple Emanu-El, "This event made possible through the generosity of Drs. Ben and A. Jess Shenson." Their generosity is legendary.

Their family was the most important part of their existence, but it extended much farther than each other and their blood relatives. This family included hundreds of young artists who were helped through the generosity of Ben and Jess. The Shensons didn't just present these artists, the artists became almost like their children. The artists would be invited to their special house on the side of Nob Hill and they would perhaps learn about the value of friendship through these caring brothers. Ben and Jess would watch over their careers. When the artists had children, Ben and Jess would carry pictures of these babies and show them to everybody and anybody, like proud grandpas.

The Shenson wisdom was stated that "To give when you're dead is like lead; to give when you're alive is like gold." Rose Shenson and her two sons Ben and Jess had a life filled with gold.

Nancy Bechtle
President, Board of Governors, San
Francisco Symphony

May 1998
San Francisco

INTRODUCTION by Reid W. Dennis

Music and the visual arts have played a major role in Jess Shenson's life since his early childhood. His family nurtured and encouraged both Jess and his brother Ben and helped them develop their appreciation of virtually all forms of artistic endeavor. Jess attended his first opera in San Francisco's Civic Auditorium when he was eight or nine years old, and he was in the audience in the new War Memorial Opera House on numerous occasions during its inaugural year of 1932. He served as an usher in that house in 1936, 1937, and 1938. Jess's interest in opera soon became a passion which has only grown in intensity in the succeeding years.

In 1959, Jess was elected to the Board of Directors of the Merola Opera Program, and in 1992 he was elected president of that board. That same year, Jess was elected to the board of the San Francisco Opera Association, and he continues to serve with great distinction on both of these boards until the present day.

As a physician, Jess Shenson has often been called upon to assist many a famous ailing singer prior to a performance, and many of them have become close personal friends. Many young singers have been helped financially to further their careers, and the famous Shenson hospitality has been enjoyed by artists of all ages at his charming and delightful home on Washington Street.

Generous, thoughtful, sensitive and caring, Jess Shenson has made our community a better place in so many ways! We shall always remain in his debt. It is a privilege to be able to call him "friend."

Reid W. Dennis, Chairman
San Francisco Opera Association

May 1998
Menlo Park, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY--A. Jess Shenson, M.D.

The California Historical Society, together with the Regional Oral History Office, invited Dr. Ben Shenson and Dr. Jess Shenson to document their lives and combined careers--one hundred shared years in medicine and community service--early in the 1990s. But their busy schedules did not allow for the time to record and document. It was only after Ben Shenson's death in 1995 that Jess Shenson agreed to take on what they had seen as a joint responsibility and carried out the interview, six sessions from May to August of 1997, in the Shenson home on Washington Street in San Francisco, a home the family has owned since 1953.

Jess Shenson, an extremely energetic man with a charming and perpetual smile, welcomed me at the door, and following a tour of the house, we sat down for the first interview in the formal upstairs living room, where there are large paintings by California artist Theodore Wores, who played so prominent a role in the lives of the Shenson brothers and their mother, Rose Shenson. Everywhere in the living room are collections of Oriental objects and furnishings gathered from the Shensons' many travels in Asia and framed photographs of Rose, Louis, and Ben Shenson, members with Jess Shenson of this extraordinarily close family.

The other interviews took place downstairs in the sunny kitchen window overlooking the San Francisco Bay and at 450 Sutter Street in the large medical office where Jess Shenson still sees patients and which was shared by the brothers from 1951 until Ben Shenson's death.

To amplify the first interview on the subject of Louis Shenson and his brothers and the kosher markets they opened in San Francisco well before the turn of the century, Jess Shenson's cousin Irma Levin invited us to her apartment for a bright supplemental conversation, recalling grandparents, colorful city neighborhoods, and family customs. Irma Levin, whose husband founded the San Francisco Film Festival, worked as a young girl in the exotic showrooms of the I. Shainin Company, where her father was employed.

The text is divided by special interest areas: following the early history of the family, there is a chapter devoted to the art of Theodore Wores, whose wife was a close family friend and whose work was restored by the Shensons and placed by them in museums and galleries worldwide. The brothers' medical practice is documented, followed by a section focusing on the brothers' many philanthropic interests, including the Merola Opera Program, the San Francisco Opera and Symphony, the Metropolitan Opera, and the San Francisco and Asian Youth Orchestras. The final chapter is devoted to the brothers' travels and other

activities as documented in almost yearly holiday letters penned to family and friends.

Because of Jess Shenson's keen interest in working on the history, his vigilant reviewing, and his generally light editing of the transcripts (he made substantial written additions to the text as noted), the history was completed in record time--just under a year from start to finish.

The Regional Oral History Office, under the direction of Willa K. Baum, thanks Michael McCone and the California Historical Society for making this oral history possible, and Irma Levin for her ancillary interview about the Shenson family. The Office, an administrative division of The Bancroft Library, was established in 1954 to augment through tape-recorded memoirs the Library's materials on the history of California and the West. Copies of interviews are available for research use in The Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections.

Caroline Cooley Crawford
Interviewer-Editor

May 1998
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
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Born: San Francisco Education: Lowell High School
 November 1, 1915 San Francisco
 Stanford University AB'3
 Stanford University MD'4

Medical: Hospital Affiliation:
 St.Francis Memorial Hospital

Appointments:
 Stanford University School of Medicine
 Associate Clinical Professor, Emeritus

Medical Societies:
 California Medical Association
 San Francisco County Medical Society
 California Academy of Medicine
 Fellow, American College of Physicians
 Board of Governors, Stanford School of Medicine Alumni Assoc

Extra: The Special Education Center of Oahu (Hawaii)
Curricular: Honorary Board Member 1973 to present
 The National Advisory Board, The National Museum of Women in
 the Arts, 1985 to present
 Committee, San Francisco Youth Orchestra, 1989 to present
 Board, San Francisco Performances, 1989 to present
 Consultant, Asian Youth Orchestra, 1987 to present
 Fine Arts Advisory Panel of the Federal Reserve Board,
 1992 to present
 Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund, Merola Program
 Shenson Young Artist Debut Fund, San Francisco Symphony
 Shenson Scholarship Fund, Ph.D. Program, Dept. of Art History
 City University of New York
 Shenson Visiting Professor in Clinical Medicine, Stanford
 University School of Medicine
 Lois and Rose Shenson Memorial Loan Fund, Stanford
 University School of Medicine
 Louis and Rose Shenson Fund, Jewish Home for the Aged
 Debuts at Davies, The Shenson Young Artist Series
 (S.F.Symphony).

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

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Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name a. Jess Shenson, M.D.

Date of birth March 22, 1921 Birthplace San Francisco

Father's full name Louis Shenson

Occupation Merchant Birthplace San Francisco

Mother's full name Rose Ruth Shenson

Occupation Housewife Birthplace New York City

Your spouse (single)

Occupation _____ Birthplace _____

Your children _____

Where did you grow up? San Francisco

Present community San Francisco

Education Andrew Jackson Grammar School, Roosevelt Jr. High School

Lowell High School, Stanford University, Stanford Medical School

Occupation(s) Physician

Areas of expertise Medicine, Art and Music

Other interests or activities See attached resume.

Organizations in which you are active See attached resume.

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Born: San Francisco Education: Lowell High School
 March 22, 1921 San Francisco
 Stanford University

Medical: Hospital Affiliation: AB 1942
 Saint Francis Memorial Hospital. Stanford University
 MD 1950

Appointments:
 Stanford University School of Medicine
 Clinical Instructor, Emeritus

Medical Societies (until retirement)

San Francisco Society of Internal Medicine
 California Society of Internal Medicine
 American Society of Internal Medicine
 San Francisco County Medical Society
 California Academy of Medicine
 American Medical Association
 California Medical Association

Boards:

Past:

Metropolitan Opera National Council, 1973-1983
 San Francisco District Metropolitan Opera Auditions
 Chairman, 1973-1980
 Metropolitan Opera National Council, WEstern Region
 Advisory Board, 1981-1982
 Alumni Association of San Francisco State University
 Honorary Life Member (1975)
 San Francisco State University President's Advisory Board,
 1981-87. Chairman, 1984-1987

Current:

Merola Opera Program Board (S.F.), Member 1959 to present.
 Executive Vice President 1984-1987; Vice-President
 1987-1989, President 1992-1995
 Triton Museum of Art (Santa Clara), Board of Trustees, 1972
 to present. President 1975-76
 The Special Education Center of Hawaii
 Honorary Board Member, 1973 to present
 National Advisory Board, The National Museum of Women
 in the Arts, Washington, D.C. 1985 to present.
 Trustee, San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum,
 formerly Archives of the Performing Arts, 1986 to
 present
 Board of Governors, San Francisco Symphony, 1988 to present

Boards: Cont.Current, cont.

Committee, San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra,
1989 to present
Board of Directors, San Francisco Opera Association,
1992 to present
Federal Reserve Board, Fine Arts Advisory Panel,
Washington, D.C. 1995 to present
Saint Francis Hospital Foundation Board, San
Francisco, 1995 to present
Board of The Clark Center for Japanese Art,
Hanford, California, 1996 to present
Board of Trustees California Historical Society,
1993 to present
Board of Directors, San Francisco Performances,
1995 to present

Established and
continue to
support yearly:

Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund, Merola
Opera Program, 1983 (S.F.)
Shenson Scholarship Fund, Ph.D. Program, Dept. of Art
History, City University of New York, 1983
Shenson Visiting Professor in Clinical Medicine,
Stanford University School of Medicine, 1986
Louis and Rose Shenson Memorial Loan Fund, Stanford
University School of Medicine, 1950
Elsbach/Shenson Scholarship, Stanford University
School of Medicine 1992
The Ben Shenson Society, Stanford University
School of Medicine, 1997
Ten Scholarships, Department of Music, Stanford
University, 1996
Dr. Ben Shenson Scholarship Fund, Lowell High
School, San Francisco, 1995
Louis and Rose Shenson Fund, Jewish Home for the Age
1983
Debuts at Davies, The Shenson Young Artists Series,
San Francisco Symphony, 1988 .

Yearly
contributions:

San Francisco Conservatory of Music, San Francisco
San Francisco Community Music Center, San Francisco
Cal Performances, University of California, Berkeley
Osher Marin Jewish Community Center, San Rafael, Ca.
Classical Philharmonic Orchestra, San Leandro, Ca.
Honolulu Academy of Arts, Honolulu, Hawaii
Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, Berkeley, Ca.
Midori Foundation, New York
Congregation Emanu-El, San Francisco
Jewish Community Federation, San Francisco
New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera, New Jersey
Licia Albanese/Puccini Foundation, New York
Connoisseur Council Asian Art Museum, San Francisco
Jade Circle, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco

INTERVIEW WITH A. JESS SHENSON

I EARLY FAMILY HISTORY

[Interview 1: May 16, 1997]##¹

[Place: Shenson home, Washington Street, San Francisco]

From Russia to San Francisco: Aaron and Fanny Shenson²

Crawford: Let's start right at the beginning, with your grandparents.

Shenson: I have much more information relative to my father's side of the family; very little relative to my mother's side of the family. My mother was born in New York, and had four brothers and one sister. One sister and one brother are still living.

Crawford: Where did her family come from?

Shenson: Her parents came from Vienna, Austria.

Crawford: Do you know more?

Shenson: I think that her father, my grandfather, had been in the court of Franz Josef in Austria. But that's as much as we know. I have tried to find other people with the same name, but without success. You know how names change: even the name Shenson I do not believe was the original. I've never been able to find out

¹This symbol (##) indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

²Dr. Shenson's cousin, Irma Shenson Levin, joined the narrator and interviewer for a short tape-recorded session after the initial interview, during which they gathered Mrs. Levin's recollections of times gone by. Mrs. Levin's memories of the Shenson families during her childhood--early years in San Francisco, pastimes, and family traditions--are incorporated in these pages.

anything about the name. My brother and I had a sort of project where when we were traveling to various cities in the United States, we looked at the phone book to see if there were other families who might be related. I think we've come across a couple, but of no significance.

Crawford: Have you tracked them down?

Shenson: Not to any great degree.

Crawford: When did her family come West?

Shenson: My mother was born in New York City on June 22, 1893, and she and her family came to San Francisco just after the 1906 earthquake and fire. She told us that when she came they lived on Pacific Avenue, about four blocks from this house. She could remember as a young girl walking around this area and could still smell the smoke.

And then of course my father's father had established the Shenson kosher meat business on McAllister Street, which in its day, was very very important to the Jewish community. I think my mother went shopping there and my father was one of the first young men she met. [laughter]

Crawford: Let's talk about your paternal grandfather who came from Vilna, in 1880, which was then part of Russia.

Shenson: I did not know him because he passed away before I was born. My brother Ben, however, who was five and a half years older--my brother was born in 1915--did know our grandfather and I'll show you some photographs of him, a very handsome man. Ben remembered when he passed away, his being in the kosher meat business on McAllister Street and going to a synagogue--what we call shuell. He had been president of Kneseth Israel Congregation for eighteen years, a very orthodox congregation, and the funeral service was carried out in a very orthodox way where the remains are on the floor and they sit shiva, they call it. I don't know the details myself, I'm embarrassed to say.

In the old days, the Jewish families did not name their children after living relatives. This created a little bit of a problem for me as I was growing up because I have a cousin six months older than I, who was born after our grandfather had passed away and so his father wanted to name his first son after the grandfather, whose first name was Aaron. When I was born, my father wanted to name his son Aaron also, which he did, so you can appreciate that with six months difference in

age and going to the same schools, people got us mixed up. Finally, I think it was when I was a senior at Lowell High School, I dropped Aaron and signed it "A." My middle name is legally Jesse, but I dropped the "e" and just became A. Jess Shenson.

Crawford: I see. What do you know of your grandparents, Mrs. Levin?

Levin: [Irma Levin is Dr. Shenson's first cousin] I know my grandfather came with his oldest son, Robert, and his wife. From the research that was possible we thought the name was changed coming through Ellis Island. But now I don't think so, Jess, because there was an article in the Los Angeles paper about ten years ago about someone named Shenson who had just come from Russia, and the fact that she had the name Shenson makes you begin to wonder if that was the name.

Or it could have been that they all spoke with a very heavy accent and very little English and it could have been another name that sounded like Shenson. Our fathers always said it might have been Say-jhon [phonetic spelling] because there was a Say-jhon bread, but they had no proof of that at all.

I have very few memories because he passed away when I was so very young, but our grandmother I remember. Her name was Fanny, and what her maiden name was we don't know.

Shenson: I remember that as a little boy I thought she was an old lady--she was maybe fifty years old [laughter]. But she was the matriarch of the family and she ruled then! Then there is the one daughter Lilly, who married a Berman, and the mother lived with the daughter. She lived with her daughter on Grove Street, in their flat, and Lilly ruled the roost because she was taking care of our grandmother.

Levin: When Lilly wanted something, she called. She wasn't bashful--and the boys came running. She caused a lot of trouble. [laughter]

Shenson: Her husband wasn't there all the time.

Levin: That's right. He was a learned scholar, very dapper, with spats and gray hair, and I think in the Hebrew he was very well educated--he was a patient of yours.

Shenson: Later on.

Levin: Unfortunately, our grandmother had a cataract surgery that left her blind, so we always remember her sitting in a chair dictating.

Crawford: Did family life revolve around her?

Levin: I think her sons did.

Shenson: Yes. They each had their own lives but when mother called--they were very attentive.

Crawford: You mentioned something about your grandfather's funeral.

Levin: I don't remember a funeral, all I remember was when he was laid out in their flat--I was about three when he died. I remember him in this bed and we were told to be quiet; we could go in and see him. If Ben remembers him it would have been around 1918 or 1919. There was straw on the floor, which was a tradition. I don't know what it meant; unfortunately, we didn't ask many questions. But I remember him in this bed and we were told to be quiet; we could go in and see him.

Crawford: So the family came from Vilna to Ellis Island, you told me.

Shenson: Yes. We know that in those days, thousands of refugees were coming. As the saying goes, they were not coming here sightseeing, either. [laughter] Why they came directly to San Francisco, we don't know. There might have been some distant relative in the Bay Area; we're not sure, because my father and the rest of the family never asked those questions. You would think the first generation here would ask questions.

But they came, and once they were settled, my father Louis, two brothers--Joseph and Jesse--and their sister were born in San Francisco. My father was born in 1888 on Shipley Street.

The Shenson Markets: 1880s to 1930s

Crawford: What do you know of the family business?

Shenson: My grandfather started the kosher meat business, and I can remember the market on McAllister Street. When he came to San Francisco in 1880 he found a job as a butcher and worked for Rabbi Markowitz for two years. During that time he earned \$12.00 a week, which was considered a very high salary and he supported his family and managed to save a small sum of money

besides. In 1882 he opened his own shop at 955 Folsom Street and then moved after the big fire to 1035 McAllister Street. In 1932 the Shenson brothers opened a very large kosher market at 1143 McAllister, just fifty years after the first store opened.

Crawford: What was the neighborhood like in your memory?

Levin: On the corner was the Ukraine Bakery, where they served pastries from the old country. I remember my father saying that because they had the butcher shop that when people came from the old country they gave them all the food they wanted and sometimes they even housed them. Do you remember those stories?

Shenson: Yes.

Levin: McAllister street was very elegant. A lady never walked down Fillmore Street without a hat and gloves. There was the Princess Theater, and dress shops, and it was elegant.

Crawford: Dr. Shenson showed me a picture taken at the beach where the ladies were in long dresses and wearing hats.

Levin: Absolutely! You just never would have walked out without all that. I'll tell you a little anecdote about the store that my mother used to say. They closed the market on Saturday and early Friday night because Saturday was the Sabbath. And so they would open at sundown and people had to go to the market Saturday night, and my mother always said that my grandfather was very handsome and resplendent in his white butcher's gown, and that he had his sons spanking clean, young and very handsome and she said all the religious mothers brought their daughters down to meet these three young men. I always thought it was four--was Sam Baker there?

Crawford: We're talking now about Robert, Louis, Joseph, Jesse?

Shenson: Not Robert. He was first born, but he left and opened a non-kosher market on Market Street. Then he opened a second one close to the Bercut Brothers Market, a very high-class market. The Bercut family was very well known.

But my parents met in the butcher shop, and yours did too! [laughter] My mother always said my father was the first man she ever met.

Levin: My parents too.

Crawford: What more do you remember about the neighborhood?

Shenson: Fillmore Street was the shopping center. I can even remember at McAllister and Fillmore, maybe several intersections, they actually had a cascade of lights over each intersection, the four corners. I haven't even thought about that for a long time.

Crawford: Would that have been the first kosher meat market?

Shenson: I think we can say it was one of the first.

Crawford: And did a good business.

Shenson: Tremendous.

Crawford: Can you talk about that, maybe define the kosher process so we get a little bit of that into the history.

Shenson: I have it here. [reading from a newspaper article--see attached]. I remember they always had a rabbi or a schochet present [at the butchering]. I know when they used to buy cattle down about Third Street--Third Street used to be a tremendous cattle and produce place--I know my father and even my brother would drive up to Petaluma and buy crates and crates of live animals; chickens and ducks. They would be killed in a kosher way that they slit the throat and drain the blood.

Crawford: Did you observe a strict kosher diet growing up?

Shenson: I don't think any of us actually adhered to the strict kosher rituals. We always attended high holiday services and even today I don't eat any pork or pork products; that's the tradition, but there was a dietary reason for that because in those days there was no refrigeration--you could get trichinosis and it became one of the precepts not to take that chance.

Levin: For every law, there was a reason and it was usually a health reason.

Crawford: Did the families go to temple?

Shenson: Yes, in the kosher meat business, the family had to maintain their image and had to be involved in the synagogue, so yes, the sons, particularly, had to maintain the tradition.

Levin: I think my father kept it up longer. I'll tell you why. When we moved to Funston Avenue, my brother and myself would be

awakened very early on the Jewish holidays and we'd walk with my father from Funston Avenue to Webster Street. You're not supposed to drive on a holiday, so later, my folks rented an apartment for the holidays, because my mother couldn't walk that distance. But then Beth Sholom was built on Funston Avenue and we no longer went that way.

Shenson: I guess we were more religious than I thought.

Levin: We were, Jess!

Shenson: On certain holidays we used only certain dishes; things like that, but as far as food, you're not supposed to eat shellfish, but we all did.

Levin: We did too, but not in the house. They are scavengers; not clean.

Rose and Louis Shenson

Crawford: What do you remember of Rose and Louis Shenson's early years?

Shenson: Here is a picture of my mother at Monroe Middle School.

Crawford: Where is she in the picture?

Shenson: Right here. The interesting thing is, eighty years later, if anybody in this picture saw my mother anywhere, they would have said, "Rose Shenson, I'd know you anywhere," because she never changed her hairdo. She wore long hair, and when ladies change their hairdo, they change their appearance. [laughter]

Crawford: I can certainly see the resemblance of your brother to your mother. I think you resemble your father.

Shenson: Yes. Here is a picture of my father growing up. Rather dapper-looking.

Crawford: He's very dapper-looking. When did the family leave Shipley Street?

Shenson: After the earthquake and fire, when everything was totally destroyed. Then most of them took their belongings, as many as they could carry, and went to Golden Gate Park. I believe the Shensons who were living on Shipley went over to Oakland, where there were some relatives. When it was safe to return, several

of the Shenson family moved to Golden Gate Avenue near Fillmore Street.

Crawford: Was that in the neighborhood of the stores? That was their focus, that they wanted to be close to the business?

Shenson: Yes.

Crawford: The Fillmore Street neighborhood--that is now the Western Addition?

Shenson: Yes, that would be the term now. In this photo, here's my father, and that's Joe Shenson, and then Irma's father Jesse, whose nickname was Shy, and then the one sister, Lilly.

Crawford: It strikes me that they did a lot of formal photography.

Shenson: There was a photographer on Fillmore Street who used to take a lot of pictures. Look at this one: I don't know if this is a wedding picture, but this is my parents in their wedding outfit. I think when Irma's parents got married, my mother took the train off and wore her wedding dress. [laughter]

Crawford: You told me that they met in the store. Was it more or less love at first sight?

Shenson: Yes. They were both very young, and I guess they just had something in common or some chemistry.

Crawford: How old were they when they married?

Shenson: My mother was twenty.

Crawford: What do you know about their early years together?

A Farm in Vacaville

Shenson: During World War I, my father had had an accident and lost part of one of his fingers, so he could not work, he could not go in the service, and he couldn't deal with the public. So the family bought a ranch in Vacaville in the East Bay, and my father went there with my mother and their two-year old baby son Ben.

My father was having problems out there, and he asked one of the neighbors, Harve Hawkins: "You know, I don't know why, but I'm just not accepted here. They think I'm a city slicker." So Harve said, "Well, do one thing and I think you'll find it'll help: grow a beard." So he grew a beard and it turned out it was a red beard. And by golly, he was accepted after that! [laughs]

Levin: I think that is a wonderful story.

Crawford: So he was accepted as a farmer, not just a gentleman farmer. Was this a working farm?

Shenson: Yes.

Crawford: More than just a vacation place.

Shenson: Oh, absolutely, yes. He meant to get established and to know the people and purchase poultry and other things for the markets.

Crawford: What are your memories of the farm?

Shenson: I was born three years after they left.

Crawford: They only had that for a short time.

Shenson: Yes. My brother and I did go back to look around occasionally, so my memories are from that time.

Family Homes

Crawford: What about the family homes?

Shenson: I was born at 1490 Golden Gate Avenue.

Crawford: And then you mentioned 440 Webster. Is that where Ben was born?

Shenson: That's where Ben was born. That's near Fell Street.

Crawford: Generally speaking, the family lived in the same area?

Shenson: Yes.

Crawford: What did they do in their spare time?

Shenson: My father was up at three or four o'clock in the morning for the market and would come home around six o'clock in the afternoon. So he devoted all his time to the market, but when he had time for vacation, he would just love to get out of town, go to the country, to a place called Richardson Springs, near Chico. Every summer, for many years, we went there. There was a little cabin you'd rent and do your own cooking. It was a true escape.

When I was two years old, we had moved from Golden Gate Avenue to 28 Ashbury Street, which was near Fulton Street, because Lowell High School had just been built there, at Masonic, Hayes, Ashbury, and Grove--those were the four corners.

Crawford: What is the building now?

Shenson: An adult education building. But my parents bought the pair of flats there because of the high school. They figured that when we'd be ready to go to high school, we'd just fall out of bed and have a half a block to go and that would be it. And then there was a grammar school called Andrew Jackson three blocks away; that's where we went to grammar school, and Ben went to Crocker and I went to Roosevelt before Lowell. So it was all planned ahead.

Crawford: What do you remember of your neighborhoods and your pastimes?

Shenson: We lived on Ashbury twenty-seven years, so I know Ashbury Street well. In fact, once in a while I'll even pass by to see what's going on there. As far as where I was born, on Golden Gate Avenue, I have very little recollection except we did go back periodically to see the lady who lived there, in the downstairs flat. I was scared of her because she was basically bedridden and she was very old. Maybe she was sixty years old, but to me she was an old lady, and I don't know why I was scared of her. And next door was Mr. and Mrs. Crabtree. They had had no children and sort of adopted Ben and myself. At Christmastime after they moved over to the East Bay and we moved to Ashbury Street they would invite us to come over for Christmas dinner. Mr. Crabtree used to like to get his violin out and he would play "Pop Goes the Weasel." I haven't thought about these things for ages.

After we lived on Ashbury Street, we moved to Palm Avenue for a relatively short period of time, and then we have been here on Washington Street since 1954. So I really haven't moved that much.

Haight and Ashbury in those days was a beautiful, beautiful shopping center. Fillmore Street also was very special, but Haight Street was the place and the Haight Theater--how many times my brother and I went up there! I think it was ten cents to go to the movies then. And the Cherry Blossom Bakery was there. Oh, it was just a beautiful neighborhood.

Crawford: What about your memories, Mrs. Levin?

Levin: Our families lived within a radius of several blocks. We lived in an apartment, then we moved to 636 Masonic Avenue, and from there we moved to Grove Street. We all went to Andrew Jackson and we all went to Lowell High School.

I didn't go to Crocker as Ben did--your mother told my mother Crocker was not a place for a little girl. So I went to Argonne and then to Lowell. Crocker was in a rough neighborhood--I don't know how else to say it. It was lower Haight Street and just a tough area. Upper Haight was nice; it took over almost from McAllister Street.

Shenson: When Ben graduated from Crocker, they had a musical, "The Magic Ruby," which they performed in the Everett School auditorium since Crocker did not have a hall. Ben was the accompanist, and it was a very warm evening and he got so warm, he took his coat off. When he looked over at my mother, he put his coat back on. [laughter] He was class president, I remember.

Crawford: What do you remember of your bar mitzvah?

Shenson: There isn't much to say except that my brother and I had someone come to our home to teach us. Today they go to Sunday school and work into it gradually, but we were tutored individually. My brother did well, but I had a hard time learning everything.

Crawford: Did you learn Hebrew?

Shenson: Just to get through the bar mitzvah. I did have to learn to read it. And I gave a speech the day I was confirmed. It was short and to the point.

Crawford: Did your parents speak Yiddish?

Shenson: Oh, they would speak Yiddish, and they would speak it sometimes when they didn't want us to know what they were talking about.

I. Shainin and Company

Crawford: Let's talk more about the family businesses.

Shenson: Well, the kosher market on McAllister Street was all retail, with a long counter in the front where people bought their meats. On the righthand side there was a delicatessen, which was run by my Aunt Lilly's son Irving. He took care of the delicatessen market, which was called Shenson's. Today there is a delicatessen out on Geary Street called Shenson's, which was sold when my cousin passed away a number of years ago. My brother and I went by to look at it some years ago; it was very discouraging, and we never went back. [laughter]

Crawford: You don't claim it.

Shenson: No, don't claim [it].

Crawford: But they did buy the name.

Shenson: They bought the business. We don't get any royalties from it. [laughter]

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Shenson: But at the 1075 Fillmore Street location, they had all kinds of retail foods besides the meat market, and in the back they had a sausage factory which was extremely successful, and of course, was all done kosher.

At some point two gentlemen came from Shanghai and stopped here, and they wanted to sell to the Shenson Brothers some casings from animals that would be used for the sausage. The casings were not kosher and so the Shenson brothers were not interested in them. Their name was Shainin, and they represented the I. Shainin Company.

Crawford: Was it a Chinese name?

Shenson: No. They were white Russians living in Shanghai, and they were interested in importing and exporting Oriental art. This was in the early to mid 1920s, before the great crash of 1929.

Irma's father had a bit of a hearing deficiency and he could no longer work with his brothers in the store, and my father, who had a feeling of camaraderie for the Chinese even though they didn't come to the kosher meat market, thought he might get involved somehow. These two white Russian brothers

said that they would be happy to work with the Shenson brothers in an importing/exporting business, and so my uncle Shy, Irma's father, started importing Chinese art.

In those days, they would bring in Peking glass and cinnabar lacquerware by the barrels. I tell you, it was incredible. I can vaguely remember going down there myself, but my uncle ran that part of the business.

Crawford: This is where your great love of Asian art comes from.

Shenson: That started it. I remember my father said to my mother that he was not sure how long we would have an interest in the business and that perhaps she should pick out some things for our home. Her reply was: "I'm afraid the boys would break everything once it was in the house!" [laughter]

My parents gave gifts to our teachers at Christmas--silks and brocades--wonderful things.

Levin: Not only to the children. I can picture in the office big barrels that went down like this and there were all kinds of little brass animals and we'd go down there and each of the children were given a little animal. I loved to go to my father's office on Market Street because I came home with so many goodies. They were very generous.

Shenson: I remember the beads, cloisonné beads, would come in barrelfuls.

Levin: And semiprecious stones; chokers and necklaces, they were just beautiful. Jade, carnelian, a lot of Peking glass--today yellow Peking glass! I have a couple of them behind glass. [laughter]

But they had a full staff, and they had people taking vases and making lamps in the factory on Market Street; it was a tremendous business.

Crawford: Was it a wholesale operation?

Levin: Strictly wholesale. Gump's and Nathan Dohrman were their biggest buyers. I can remember meeting Mr. Gump when I was a little girl, and then my father had a close friendship with Martin Rosenblatt, who was related to the Gumps. He used to be so excited, because from the kosher butcher shop to Oriental art was a vast jump! My father was a quick learner and he had

a good personality and everybody liked him. He worked hard--all the time.

Crawford: Who do you remember seeing in your home?

Levin: My folks entertained a lot, people coming in and out from the Orient and New York, where the main office was. My mother was a gracious hostess; my father was hard of hearing and he was very quiet. In those days the hearing aids weren't perfected and the outside noises were terrible. I still speak louder than I should because as a child I hated hearing my father saying, "I can't hear you." But I remember loads of company and there were always family gatherings in the daytime for my mother's sisters.

Crawford: Did your mothers see a lot of each other?

Shenson: My mother had more involvements with music clubs and went down to Stanford when Ben was an undergraduate to the Mothers Club.

Levin: But we were together a lot. We had the same piano teacher and the same orthodontist. [laughter]

Shenson: Remember Dr. Kenneth Terwilliger--he was one of the pioneers in straightening children's teeth. His office was at 909 Hyde Street; across from the St. Francis Hospital. My father took the two of us, and our cousin Walter, to Dr. Terwilliger, and I was so scared, because we had a dentist down on Market Street who used to take pliers out of his drawer and pull teeth. My father made a deal that Dr. Terwilliger would take care of the three Shenson children--three for the price of two! [laughter]

Levin: That's what we did; it was fun! With Mr. Mihailoff, the piano teacher, we petered out, but what I remember was that we had a wonderful family life of togetherness.

Crawford: Did you ever work in the family stores?

Levin: Yes. My father was friendly with Milton Meyer, who ran all of Nathan Dorhman, and I remember him saying to my dad once, "Say, Shenson, why don't you open a little jewelry counter here?"

So he had a counter--it was right by the door on Stockton Street. It grew bigger, and he had a lady who was named Shepherd and she worked there during the week and at sixteen I ran that counter on Saturday. Of course I didn't get paid for it, but I was so excited, and I remember the actor Regis Toomey came in with a rose quartz necklace and wanted a pair of earrings. I said if he came back in an hour I would have the

earrings. So I broke up another necklace and made the earrings--that is how long ago I learned how to do that!
[laughter]

Crawford: How did you learn to make jewelry?

Levin: When they had those necklaces in I. Shainin there was a man who did all the repairs and I would go down and watch and I learned how to do it. I still have my tools and I use them. [laughter]

Shenson: I remember Eddie Kalman had a floral shop on Market Street and I used to sell flowers for him, and then when we moved to 450 Sutter he had the store there near Powell.

Crawford: So you had unpaid occupations.

Levin: Very unpaid! [laughter]

Crawford: Could you circulate in the city as children?

Levin: I think we were so busy that we didn't leave our neighborhoods too much.

Shenson: Our friends lived around where we lived, but there were events downtown too. The Allied Arts Club met at the Palace Hotel on Saturdays and there would be a little recital and then afterwards everyone went to the Garden Court for tea. We always had Chicken à la King and toasted buttered raisin toast and for dessert a parfait. Not every Saturday; maybe once a month--and that was fifty cents a person!

Levin: As a student at Lowell I remember my friends went to the St. Francis on Saturdays. We could go on a Saturday night to any of the hotels with a date and get a pitcher of punch for fifty cents and dance to the big dance bands.

Grant Avenue was wonderful in those days. I remember as a child going with my father during Christmas to restock all the stores in Chinatown--he would take orders--and they were elegant shops. Madame Butterfly, Shioto on Sutter Street.

Shenson: Yes. And then during the war, all the Japanese were evacuated, and Grant Avenue with all the elegant stores changed--it was a disgrace, a tragic situation, because they owned many of those stores and had to evacuate and sell everything. Now it isn't possible to get the fine old antiques from the Orient.

Crawford: How did I. Shainin market their things?

Shenson: Gump's bought a lot of the better things. I knew and treated Martin Rosenblatt, who married Ismeda--she ran the jewelry department.

Crawford: When did I. Shainin close?

Levin: My parents went to New York for a month, just before the crash, to liquidate I. Shainin. They were out in plenty of time.

Shopping and Cooking: Family Pastimes

Crawford: Going back to the markets for a moment; who was the clientele for your market?

Shenson: People traveled from all over the city to the Shenson kosher market.

Crawford: It wasn't just for the Jewish population.

Shenson: Mainly it was. Unless someone happened to be living in the neighborhood. But even today, I've run into people who have said: "My grandmother would go all the way down to McAllister Street just to buy chicken or to buy this or to buy that." So Shenson is still almost a household name, among the older generation of course.

Crawford: Was your mother a good cook?

Shenson: My father, look at him! We were always disturbed about my father relative to his weight; particularly being two doctors--

Crawford: Later.

Shenson: Oh, later, yes. But he was very heavy as a young man. At the very beginning of their marriage, he was thin; but he loved to eat. And my mother was the best cook. As we got a little bit older, we said, "Dad, don't you realize that this is not going to be good for your health?" He didn't care. He said, "I love to eat, and if it means a shorter lifespan, I'm going to eat." He got up to, I think, about two hundred and thirty pounds. He wasn't as tall as I am, so he was very heavy. And my mother--oh, what a cook!

Crawford: What did she cook?

Shenson: Staples. Roasted meats, vegetables. I was such a finicky eater, and so thin.

Crawford: Yes, you've always been slim.

Shenson: Oh, I started to pick up a little weight, but I've been more conscious of it. I've tried to keep it down. My father would bring home meat, and if it was lamb chops, I'd cut all the fat off. He said, "Someday, you're going to be sorry!" [laughing] I still cut off the fat.

But we never went hungry. Just the staples. Nothing exotic, to be sure.

Crawford: But good cooking. Did she do her own shopping?

Shenson: Yes, and then as I said, the market would close on Saturdays because it would be the Sabbath, and then it would open after sundown on Saturday. So Saturday in the daytime my father would love to go out shopping, take his two little boys with him. When we would go, we would buy, buy, and buy. And I tell you, our kitchen looked almost like a store unto itself with the canned goods.

Crawford: You would buy for the week.

Shenson: For the week or the month or the year. Oh yes. Buy everything in quantity. My father would bring home all the meats and my mother would buy the vegetables. There was a very large store out on Mission Street, and my father loved to shop, so he would buy large quantities of canned goods.

Crawford: Why did he buy in such quantity?

Levin: That had to be something they inherited, because my father did the same thing. My husband did the same thing--if you sent him for one package you got twelve!

Shenson: Just to have it available in case you couldn't go every week. I guess it was psychological.

Levin: I don't think it was that they were hungry, because they always had the meat market.

Shenson: No, but the security--it was important to have the provisions in the house.

Crawford: Were there set times when the families got together?

Shenson: Where there was a wedding or a bar mitzvah or a religious holiday--Passover--there were the rituals and the families would get together. My father worked with Joe in the office every day, and Irma's father worked downtown, but he was involved in the store. He came in Saturdays--he was the catalyst--worked with one and then the other.

Crawford: What were your first memories of Ben and Jess?

Levin: We were always together. Jess was a little boy! I have a wonderful picture of the four of us--did you have knickers?

Shenson: Yes. [laughter]

Levin: I wore middys in school, and there were dances every week that my friends gave in the hotels and you could have an orchestra of young students and there were big parties almost every weekend. My grandfather was a designer of women's wear so my mother had access to lots of fashions and when I came from school there would be a note: "Meet me downtown and we'll buy a new gown for the party." So I guess I had those kinds of clothes.

Shenson: No jeans! [laughter]

Levin: No, never.

Crawford: Did you have help in the homes?

Levin: Yes. We were lucky. My mother always had, and I did too, a young Oriental schoolgirl. Then she had a woman who cleaned. For years and years, she had a lady who she called in who was a cateress--Mrs. Rice.

Shenson: We didn't have that sort of help, but when we lived at 28 Ashbury we constructed a room downstairs and we had a Filipino boy who lived there and he did the heavy work around the property. I can't remember any woman coming in.

Life in the Depression

Crawford: What do you remember of the Depression years?

Shenson: I think it affected the financial stability of the Shenson brothers drastically, as it did with everyone else. Before the

crash, you could buy on time, or borrowed money, but once the Depression started, they lost everything.

Crawford: You mentioned that the families invested in properties; which specific properties?

Shenson: There were some apartment buildings on Hyde Street; I remember my father pointing out all kinds of things, but it was all on time, and when you couldn't meet the mortgage payments you lost everything.

But we were never really aware of the Depression. We always had food on the table; we had pocket money; we weren't deprived.

Levin: I have a wonderful story about the Depression. I don't know if you know; I don't know how it came to be. In my bedroom, above my closet was an unfinished space in which you could put your hand. You had to get on a chair to put your hand there, and I always knew that my father had money up there.

Jess' father and my father were always close to the people at the American Trust Bank, and one night just before the crash--the crash occurred on October 29--so it was the 28th or the 27th and my father came home with a huge bag. It was tremendous! It was all greenbacks--loads of them--and he said, "I want you to get on the chair and put everything up there."

So I did, and after the crash, he told me to get it down. He put it back in the bag and took it down to Nathan Dohrman for the payroll. Nathan Dohrman wasn't a Gump's, but it was the kind of store where a bride registered. My father sold them Oriental art, and he was friendly with them, and that's where the money went but to meet the payroll--it wasn't for us. That was something so imprinted on my mind. After that there was never any money there.

Crawford: How about the expansion of the market in 1932? They must have worked awfully hard so close after the Depression.

Levin: They worked very hard.

Shenson: The market was brand new and it was the last word in 1932. The sausage factory and the poultry department were in the back while the tremendous meat counter and the delicatessen were in the front.

Levin: They had a buttermilk churner in the window.

Shenson: They had other things that go with a delicatessen--canned goods and so on. It was a very elegant market.

Crawford: Who was Sam Baker?

Shenson: On Fillmore Street there was the Eagle Market which was a part of Shenson's. Sam Baker ran it but it wasn't strictly kosher.

Crawford: When did the principal market close?

Shenson: My father left in 1937-38, but his brother Joe and your father, Irma, were still involved. In 1939 and 1940 my father was very involved with the Worlds Fair on Treasure Island. He was part of a company that had all the hot dog, hamburger and popcorn concessions on the grounds. Ben and I must have gone over two hundred times on the ferryboat to Treasure Island, particularly at night. It was a veritable fairyland with spectacular lighting, beautiful flowers--truly a fairyland when the weather cooperated!

Levin: I'm trying to associate the closing date with my marriage in 1937 to see if it was still open. The one on Treasure Island. I don't remember ever going down there after I got married. Isn't that strange?

Shenson: Not under the circumstances! [laughter]

Schools, Music and Other Family Activities

Crawford: How about family life and your times as families together?

Levin: Our foursome and your foursome were close. The family was the most important thing all our parents felt.

Crawford: You went to Roosevelt and Ben went to Crocker then all four cousins went to Lowell--what was it like in those days?

Shenson: Well, first of all, now they're busing students here and there; and you have a tremendous Asian population, all of whom study very hard and compete. The present Lowell High School has its problems relative to the number of student admitted. You have to apply to get into Lowell now. But it was sort of pre-college, whereas Commerce, Galileo, Polytechnic were not scholastically in the same category.

Crawford: So Lowell was the merit school. It looks like it wasn't a very mixed population.

Shenson: The Japanese population wasn't that great, and there were no large minority groups. There were some Chinese, and after school they would always go down to Grant Avenue to go to Chinese school. That was a must.

Crawford: Who do you remember? Were there any special teachers?

Shenson: Well, Julia Neppert was the music teacher; Frank Blackburn Tucker taught Latin, and Mr. Schwartz taught chemistry.

Crawford: Why is it that everybody's Latin teacher is the one they always remember?

Shenson: I don't know [laughs]. From grammar school, I remember Anna Bridge and Mrs. Lytton. My mother would belong to the PTA, the Parent-Teacher's Association, get to know the teachers and invite them over to the house after school or for a birthday or one thing or another. So we got to know our teachers, and of course, respected our teachers. Today, things are a little different.

Oh, I could write a book on just the teachers. I can remember Anna Bridge sending me a post card from Hawaii! Her next post card came from the Taj Mahal. Because you see, in those days, school teachers had at least three months vacation and travel was so inexpensive. Of course the dollar bought a lot more.

Levin: It was a wonderful time. Most of my friendships were formed at Lowell. We all had close teachers; I went two years after Ben. I was president of Pacific Relations Club, which had to do with political relations and import-export, which was just starting up.

Crawford: Would you mention your famous classmate from Lowell, Dr. Shenson?

Shenson: Yes, I graduated from Lowell with Carol Channing. I still see her and we've been lifelong friends. And even today, if she is interviewed in San Francisco, she loves to tell about the good old days. Inevitably, she will say, "You know, there was this fellow sitting next to me in Mr. Schwartz' chemistry class and he was so helpful to me because I wasn't the best student--he's a doctor today." [laughter]

But I remember her vividly. On the back of the front cover of our yearbook there is a photo of Carol and I dancing in the courtyard after one of the rallies.

I remember she would mimic the teachers--she was absolutely great. Hand her a microphone and she could captivate any audience, even in those days. She said she wasn't the best student and she really wasn't. She won the debating contest, though, and she and her mother flew to Hawaii, which to me was like going to the other end of the rainbow.

After we graduated she went back to Bennington, and when I was interning at the San Francisco County Hospital, Time magazine had Carol on the cover as "The Toast of Broadway in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes." Soon after that I attended the AMA convention in Chicago and then went on to Washington with my mother. As the taxi was taking us to the Hilton Hotel, I passed the National Theater, where she was playing in that show, and so I bought a pair of tickets, and afterwards we went backstage to see the "Toast of Broadway." I had left a note with the doorman before the theater, and when we went back the stage door was open and I could see Carol at the end of the corridor. She saw me and it was just like old times again!

She was one of the first people to telephone me after Ben passed away. She invited me to the opening of "Dolly" in October in Washington, and I told her it was too soon, but when I went to New York a year ago she had a third row, center seat waiting for me and I had a nice visit with her and her husband Charles after the performance. Incidentally, in 1998 we will celebrate our sixtieth Lowell reunion.

Crawford: Good memories. You mentioned that when you were in school you came home at lunchtime for a meal cooked by your mother. Did you always come home for a hot lunch?

Shenson: Usually, yes. Had to fatten me up [laughs].

Crawford: So you had your two big meals a day and you stayed as slender as could be.

Shenson: Well, relatively so, fortunately. My mother became heavy, but then she kept her weight down. But here's my brother: look at how thin he is. This is on the porch at Palm Avenue.

Crawford: Want to say something about your piano lessons?

Shenson: Sergei Mihailoff was the piano teacher.

Crawford: Oh, that sounds very serious.

Shenson: He had a hard time with me because I just wasn't that adept, but he was a private teacher and he taught all four of us. Ben was a very, very good student and a marvelous pianist. Many thought he would become professional, but once he went into medical school, he never touched the keyboard again.

When he went to Stanford, Ben had a room on the ground floor in Encina Hall, and he had an upright piano he bought for fifty dollars. And for another fifty dollars, he bought a Model T Ford.

Crawford: He brought a piano to Stanford?

Shenson: He brought it down.

Crawford: That must have been truly unique.

Shenson: Yes. There were three other friends of his--Adrian Teal, Al Lubin, who became a doctor too and wrote a scholarly book on Van Gogh, and one other fellow I cannot remember. All of them were musicians, and one of them had a contact with the American President Lines. To make a long story short, they formed a little ship's orchestra, the four of them. I can remember there was a waterfront strike here in San Francisco because of Harry Bridges, so we put my brother and the other three fellows on a train and they went down to Los Angeles to board the President Monroe.

Crawford: That really was a reward for all that practicing, wasn't it?

Shenson: Oh yes, it was. But can you imagine the experience! If Ben was sitting here, he could tell you almost hour by hour what he did. Of course it was a long trip from here, in those days, to Honolulu.

Crawford: And their job was to entertain?

Shenson: That's right. And if they played, fine; if they didn't, you know, it was all right. They had no heavy schedule. The next port of call was Kobe, Japan. And of course, this was foreign land to them. Then when they went down to Hong Kong, Hong Kong was just a little sleepy fishing village. But Shanghai, Shanghai was the Paris of the Orient. And one of his classmates was Norrie Evertt, whose family owned the Evertt Steamship Company in Shanghai. Apparently they had a lovely apartment and they had a special dinner party on the roof the evening the four "musicians" arrived. I remember my brother

telling me about the dinner, the servants, and all the details, and as I will tell you later, my brother took me back to Shanghai fifty years later; my first trip to China.

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Crawford: You mentioned a piano contest that Ben entered?

Shenson: Do you remember the Call Bulletin?

Crawford: Yes.

Shenson: The Call Bulletin used to have piano contests. We were living on Ashbury Street at that time and my brother entered a contest. In those days we didn't have refrigeration. Ice for the ice boxes was delivered by trucks and it was not uncommon for boys in particular to go out to the ice trucks and take some ice as the truck was moving slowly from house to house. Unfortunately, Ben slipped and he broke his arm. So Mr. Mihailoff said, "Well, you're signed up. You've got to learn a piece with one hand only for the piano competition."

Crawford: Did he win?

Shenson: He won!!! The local newspaper had an article, "The little fellow didn't propose to let a broken arm interfere with his plans. He consulted with his teacher, was told that Capricioso in E flat for the right hand is the only right hand number in the whole library of piano music." That is what Ben played and he came in first place.

Crawford: What a good story! Well, I know Yehudi Menuhin grew up in San Francisco about that time. Did your family have any contact with the Menuhin family?

Shenson: Yes. My mother always talked about them. Yehudi was not born in San Francisco but he was raised in San Francisco. Mother remembered when his father had Yehudi in the baby carriage and was wheeling him in front of Golden Gate Avenue where we lived. There was just one year difference in his and my brother's age.

Crawford: They lived in that neighborhood as well?

Shenson: Yes. But his father was very religious: he wouldn't permit Yehudi to go to public school; he [sent him] to Jewish schools --Yehudi, Hephzibah, and Yalta were the three children, and the parents were so strict. I have the program when he made his debut at the Civic Auditorium. In the front there is a photograph with a violin and the violin is bigger than he is.

So we knew Yehudi Menuhin from afar, you might say. Then in 1989 the Asian Youth Orchestra was first formed, and Yehudi was the first conductor of the Asian Youth Orchestra and has continued as music director.

San Francisco Families and Associations

Crawford: When you were growing up, did you know all the families who were so closely involved in music? Sloss, Stern, Koshland?

Shenson: Oh, I knew of them, of course. It was common to have a little reception on a Saturday in their homes.

Crawford: And you could go?

Shenson: Oh, absolutely.

Crawford: You mentioned Agnes Albert before. She was a Tobin, was she?

Shenson: Yes. She is a remarkable woman. I went to the San Francisco Youth Orchestra meeting the other day, and there she was. She doesn't miss a thing.

Crawford: She told the story of having a house guest in Carmel when she was a little girl. Her parents brought him here to perform and she remembered that he rehearsed and told stories to the children. At the end she divulged that it was Horowitz.
[laughs]

Shenson: Oh, yes. She's just a remarkable person.

Crawford: Were all these families like the Tobins very involved with music and musicians?

Shenson: Yes.

Crawford: What was going to the Petit Trianon like?

Shenson: Well, you know, when you're little, you are certainly impressionistic. I went there many times. I can remember going up the stairs into this larger foyer, and then I remember going toward the back and there was a music room and a lot of French windows. There would be a singer or a pianist, usually quite young, and I always looked forward to the refreshments afterwards [laughs]. I was pretty young then. But I heard

Horowitz too. My mother would take us to the Civic Auditorium before the Opera House was built.

Crawford: Was that during the week or would that be on the weekend?

Shenson: Yes, usually there was a recital on Saturday.

Crawford: And even though that was a religious day, you could do those kinds of things.

Shenson: We were never that religious. We observed the holidays, and as I said before, I don't eat any pork or pork products; but it's habit more than anything else.

Crawford: What about philanthropic organizations? Did your parents belong to any of the clubs?

Shenson: No one in our family belonged to any fraternal organizations. A lot of people belonged to clubs, particularly doctors, in order to meet people, but we didn't join anything. My mother belonged to the Pacific Music Club and the Allied Arts Music Club, and the Women's Club at Stanford.

Crawford: Did they have any special welfare agencies that they helped?

Shenson: Yes, I think I mentioned that my grandfather was one of the founders of the Hebrew Free Loans Association. Any refugees coming to San Francisco that needed some money could go and apply for it. That's a very important organization.

Levin: It is still operating today, giving scholarships to students.

Major Influences#

Crawford: What were the major influences in your lives, growing up? Certainly your mothers and fathers. But as you look back, who influenced you the most?

Shenson: Well, of course, you've said that our mother certainly was a major influence, but our father in his quiet, unassuming fashion was equally important in that respect. He did have to work hard and long hours, but he encouraged us; he was always available. One parent wasn't any more dominant than the other, although in retrospect when I talk about these things I'm mentioning my mother all the time because of course she had the time, she had the interest. My father enjoyed it, but he was a

working man. I'd say they influenced us almost equally. The other most important person was my brother. No question.

Crawford: How did he influence you?

Shenson: I knew what a wonderful person he was, how revered he was. You know, when he applied for medical school, Dr. George Barnett interviewed him. Dr. Barnett said to Ben, "Why do you want to be a doctor?" and he said, "Well, first of all, I want to help people. I want to be respected by the community. And I want to make a living."

Crawford: We have talked about how close you were, and also how different you were.

Shenson: Totally different!

Crawford: Talk about that a little bit.

Shenson: You can almost tell from the photographs how physically different we looked. He was dark complected; he looked more like my mother, basically. He was much more outgoing than I. When the two of us would go out together, I guess he did most of the talking. But we were different in many other ways. We had different interests: in one sense he was the businessman of the operation as I said once before, and he always considered me the "curator."

Crawford: What did he mean by that?

Shenson: Later on, he took care of the financial matters and he knew that I was always involved in getting other things organized. There were the Theodore Wores paintings that consumed a lot of time, and, as a matter of fact, still do. Of course, this was totally an extracurricular project because we both had a very, very busy practice of medicine and worked very hard.

Crawford: Who influenced you most, Mrs. Levin?

Levin: It's hard for me to say. My parents were very special and my husband was exceptional and we were married fifty-eight years and my children and grandchildren too--I would say all of my family.



A native of San Francisco, Theodore Wores is one of the best-known artists to capture the old Hawaiian lifestyle on canvas. *The Lei Maker*, his most famous work, portrays the spirit and beauty of the islands. It depicts a young woman seated on a lauhala mat, peacefully stringing 'ilima flowers. She is dressed in a red *holokū* with a head lei of red blossoms and green *maile* leaves.

After many years painting in Japan, New York, and California, Wores returned to Hawai'i in 1901. His Hawaiian subjects, consisting mainly of landscapes and portraits, record the islands' lifestyle and environment. This documentation was important to him because of the vast development that was quickly changing the charm of old Hawai'i. Portraits such as *The Lei Maker* offer the viewer a feel for the way the islands were at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Theodore Wores, 1859-1939, United States

The Lei Maker (Portrait of Lizzie Vietor), 1901

oil on canvas, 36 x 29 in. (91.5 x 73.6 cm.)

Honolulu Academy of Arts. Gift of Dr. Ben Shenson

and Dr. A. Jess Shenson, 1986 (5490.1)

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II THE WORK OF THEODORE WORES AND SHENSON PATRONAGE

[Interview 2: May 30, 1997]##

Theodore Wores and Carrie Wores

Crawford: Today we will talk about your family's involvement with Theodore Wores.

Shenson: How did the Shenson family get involved in the work of Theodore Wores? My brother and I had met Theodore Wores. First of all, Theodore was born in San Francisco, Ben and I were born in San Francisco, Mrs. Wores was born in San Francisco: so we all had our common roots here. Actually, I think Theodore was born near the place where Brooks Hall is today, by the Civic Center, in 1859.

We had met Theodore when we were growing up. He and his wife Carolyn--everyone called her Carrie--lived at 1001 California Street, at the Morsehead Apartments. The Morsehead family had gone to Europe and seen this gorgeous chateau; they came to San Francisco and built the apartment house that still stands there. I don't think anyone knows it's called the Morsehead Apartments unless they're older. But that's the fourth corner of Nob Hill. The Mark Hopkins, the Fairmont, the Pacific Union Club, and 1001 California Street.

Crawford: Very close to the Miller House.

Shenson: Next to the Miller House. It was a ten-room apartment; each floor had ten rooms, and Mrs. Wores lived there for twenty-five years.

Crawford: Where was she born?

Shenson: I believe Carrie was born on Buchanan Street in the Western Addition.

The Morseheads had two young sons when they built the building. The lower level or basement of the apartment house had a theater for them to play in. It had a stage, but no permanent seats. Theodore Wores used that space for his studio; although he didn't paint there he did hang many of his paintings there.

It was a closed room, but very large, and I have photographs of it--you can see where the paintings were hung three high around the entire room and were also on the floor. Theodore was a most prolific painter. That's all he did; he never sold shoes or waited on tables; he just painted.

Crawford: So they had some private wealth.

Shenson: When Theodore was young, before he got married, he never had to work because he sold his paintings and made a living that way. In 1910 he got married for the first time to Carolyn Bauer. The Bauers owned the Bauer-Schweitzer Malthouse, which took up almost a square block and I believe had a railroad tie going into it. Part of the building is still there today. Mrs. Wores' two brothers ran the Malthouse.

Theodore continued painting, never had to worry about "food on the table." After 1910 few of his paintings were for sale and none came up for auction. After forty years, it is understandable that an artist's name can be forgotten if there is no turnover of his work, and my brother and I realized that this was one of the reasons his work was not better known.

Rose Shenson and Carrie Wores: A Close Relationship

Shenson: My mother and Mrs. Wores were very close friends. My father died in the middle of December, 1950, and Mrs. Wores' remaining brother died the same week in 1950, and this episode sort of brought my mother and Mrs. Wores even closer.

We were living at 58 Palm Avenue at that time, and shortly after my father passed away my brother and I were anxious to move, as was our mother. We were aware of the magnificent views in San Francisco, and because my brother and I had

traveled a great deal we were aware of the importance of a view.

My brother spent time looking around at different locations, and on Thanksgiving day in 1953 we were shown our present home. It had not been occupied for over six months and was in a deplorable, run-down condition, and the garden was like a jungle, but the view from the third floor was breathtaking. Initially we thought we would tear down the house and build three apartments, but the narrow driveway posed a problem and my mother in her wisdom suggested that we merely clean up the house, live in it for a while, and see if we were happy in that location. Of course today I wouldn't touch one shingle of that building!

When we moved here, Mrs. Wores lived at 1001 California Street, and even before that, she and my mother shared a box on Thursday afternoons for the Symphony and also shared a box for Dollar Opera. The Wores had no children, so gradually Mrs. Wores looked upon my brother and me as her sons. Once we were settled in our new home, we would pick up Carrie Wores on our way home from the office on Friday nights and the four of us would have dinner together. This was eventually extended to include Saturday and Sunday nights as well.

In the mid-1950s I started taking my mother to New York City between Christmas and New Year's, and when my mother asked Carrie to join us she said, "My brother George always told me never to fly. But this was a long time ago, and I would like to go!"

So we took little Carrie with us that year and when we returned home she cried. She wanted to continue traveling! This set the pace for the next fifteen years--the three of us went to New York City for Christmas and New Year's.

Restoring and Exhibiting Wores' Work: 1968

Shenson: As I mentioned, several years before Theodore Wores passed away in 1939, he had used the basement space at 1001 California as an art gallery. The only door to the room was always locked and Mrs. Wores had the only key, so few people ever came to see the paintings or knew they existed.

One day, many years after Theodore had passed away, someone told Mrs. Wores that she would have to move the paintings because the room was going to be redesigned and a restaurant put in there. There had been the Papagayan Room in the Fairmont Hotel for several years and it was this restaurant that was intended for relocation at 1001 California Street.

Mrs. Wores and her business manager and attorney found space for the paintings in the Marines Memorial Club on Sutter Street and everything was moved there--an overwhelming job, but things went smoothly and again the paintings were hung close to one another and some were stacked on the floor. Included in the collection were fifty works Theodore painted in Taos, New Mexico, and the surrounding area. He had told his wife that she mustn't ever sell those--that they should be kept as his legacy to her.

Nothing had been done to the paintings so it took countless days and months to clean and reframe many of them. Most people do not realize that oil paintings need care--they have to be cleaned and can't just be hung on the wall forever.

During this time of restoration, we received some important memorabilia relative to Mr. Wores, although much of his work and papers had been destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fire. Theodore had had his studio in the Montgomery Block Building, which was totally destroyed. Part of the memorabilia we received at the time were the letters Theodore wrote to Carrie every day while he was in Taos.

Crawford: When he lived elsewhere and worked, she didn't want to go?

Shenson: She had responsibilities here. Her brother and her mother were originally living with them at 1001 California, and her mother lived on to be over a hundred. I don't remember ever meeting her mother, since she passed away before Theodore did.

Crawford: But you did know Theodore.

Shenson: Yes, but more or less casually, because you see, that would have been in the forties, even late thirties. Sometimes we would get a little sketch or little painting for a birthday or Christmas. But Ben and I were busy going to school and getting into college, and staying in college. It was all hard work. I can remember some casual meetings, but we never sat down in the evening together, just the three or four of us, unfortunately.

Crawford: You did a great deal of work with the paintings and working with curators.

Shenson: Yes. We finally got the paintings cleaned and hung, and then we decided we should introduce the paintings to people who had heard about Theodore through us or through Carrie, so we had an open house in 1968 at the Marines Memorial and it was an unveiling of the three hundred paintings. It brought the art historians literally out of the woodwork! [laughter]

Crawford: Good! Who came?

Shenson: Lewis Ferbraché came one evening--Lewis Ferbraché was initially involved in the Oakland Museum before it was built and I think after it was built for a while. He has since passed away. Dr. Joseph Baird came that day, and Betty Hoag, who lives down in Carmel now. Those three, and there may have been others. They all said, "We knew the name of Theodore from the archives, but we didn't realize he had done all these outstanding paintings!"

Charles Gould of the S.F. Examiner and the Resurrection of Wores' Work

Shenson: What really brought about our involvement was a gentleman whose name was Mr. Charles Gould. Do you know the name? Well, he was the assistant publisher of the New York Journal American. Seymour Berkson was the publisher, and while he was here and staying at the Mark Hopkins he became ill and called my brother, who went over to see him. He told my brother he had just had another coronary. His diagnosis was right, and he was taken to St. Francis Hospital.

In those days, a person with an acute coronary was put to bed for about thirty days, and gradually ambulated for the next thirty days, returning back to work in about another month. They didn't go in one day and out three days later. So he stayed in the hospital for quite some time. When Mr. Berkson was still a patient, he called Charles Gould and said, "The other Dr. Shenson and his mother and friend are in New York; do anything you can to help them." Of course, those were the great days of New York and Broadway; you didn't know which show to go to first. Once I took them to Radio City Music Hall in the morning, a matinee in the afternoon, and then an evening show. [laughing] Well, Mr. Gould and his staff helped us get any tickets we wanted, which in those days were hard to get.

Charles Gould was then transferred to San Francisco and became the publisher of the Examiner. He was such a wonderful, wonderful man, and beloved by everybody. We were really the first people he knew here, so after he and his wife were settled down in Hillsborough, we asked them to dinner at Trader Vic's. I bet Hans Brandt waited on us.

Crawford: I'm sure he did.

Shenson: We had a delightful dinner, and then Ben asked if they would like to see some of the paintings. Trader Vic's was just a block and a half from the Marines Memorial Club, so the two of them and the four of us went to the third floor of the Club, and when we opened the door to Carrie's gallery there was a blaze of color from over a hundred canvases. Charles Gould looked at Ben and he looked at me, and he said, "Do you realize what is locked up behind this door?"

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Shenson: So in the Sunday Examiner of November 12, 1967, in color, there was a feature article about "The Widow's Gallery" with a picture of Mrs. Wores and they even had one of me--and that was the beginning.

Crawford: Was it written by a critic?

Shenson: No, not an art critic. It was a feature article, and it brought all of these people--the critics and the art historians--out of the woodwork. So we always give Charles the credit for starting the resurrection of the work of Theodore Wores. Following that article there was suddenly a lot of interest in Wores' work. One of the people who contacted us was Mr. Robert Morgan.

The Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara and a Traveling Exhibit

Shenson: Robert Morgan was the founder of the Triton Museum of Art that originally was, I think, in an empty department store building in San Jose. The Museum then was moved to Santa Clara and was given seven acres of land adjoining the civic center in Santa Clara at a dollar a year, and he put up three small octagonal-shaped buildings to continue the work of the Triton Museum.

Mr. Morgan read about the paintings and phoned and wanted to know more, so we invited him to the gallery. Next we were invited down to Santa Clara to see the Triton Museum of Art. It was obvious to us that this had a great future because of course in those days Silicon Valley was just getting started, and Santa Clara and San Jose were the fastest growing communities in the country.

So in 1968 we gave the Triton Museum of Art money to build a fourth octagonal-shaped building in memory of Mr. Wores for some of his paintings. In the late 1920s, Theodore and Carrie had gone down to Saratoga and bought an abandoned Methodist church, and he used that as his studio. In those days, there were no housing developments, shopping centers, or freeways--nothing but large fruit orchards.

Crawford: I was surprised to read in Dr. Baird's introduction in the Japanese exhibit catalogue how much he had traveled--Japan in the 1880s, New York, Martha's Vineyard, London, Hawaii, Spain, Los Angeles.

Shenson: Yes. But after setting up his studio he traveled mainly down to Saratoga. During the summer they lived there. We have a lot of large canvases of the "Blossom Period," as we call it. Mrs. Wores gave quite a few to Triton and we gave quite a few also. In fact, I'm still on the board of Triton, but as an honorary board member. Subsequently, they've built a much larger building. But that's how we got involved down there, through the article that Mr. Robert Morgan read in the newspaper.

Later on in 1980 one of the curators from the Muckenthaler Museum came up to Triton Museum of Art and saw some of the Wores paintings there. The director of that museum had just taken a new job at the Huntsville Museum of Art in Alabama, and he wanted to do a retrospective exhibition of Wores' works in Huntsville. Directors usually inherit a certain exhibition schedule, but when he had finished with what he had inherited, he wanted to set up his own exhibition schedule and the Wores exhibition his own first major exhibition.

So the director and curator came and selected the paintings and wrote a very excellent catalogue. No fee was charged for the use of the paintings, but the museums had to have what they call wall-to-wall insurance: the moment the paintings leave, until they are returned they must be covered, plus they also paid the shipping costs. That was a major exhibition and the first major Wores traveling exhibition. I was in New York at

the time the exhibition was up and went down to Huntsville on my way home. The show was incredibly well received.

And then the paintings and the crates were sent back, and we decided to have another exhibition.

Crawford: I read that you all worked very hard to take the paintings around.

Shenson: Oh yes. I contacted a lot of museums and finally in 1981--December the thirteenth, 1981--the same show opened at the Tucson Museum of Art. Between December '81 and '85 the exhibition was shown in twenty museums throughout the United States.

Crawford: When Tucson sends out a brochure, say, do other museums ask for a show?

Shenson: No. I had all this confirmed before it started. That was December '81 and it ended up here at the California Historical Society in '85. So that was quite a long tour. I organized the exhibition in a geographical direction to save the various museums traveling costs. It went from Tucson, Arizona, to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to Shreveport, Louisiana, to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Jackson, Florida, etc. In other words, it went down the southern part of the United States, then up along the East Coast, along the northern part of the United States, and then came back to California.

Crawford: That took a great deal of organizing, didn't it?

Shenson: Yes, and I had to contact an awful lot of museums. These were not the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the DeYoung Museum; these were more regional museums. I think they appreciated the exhibition more than some of the big museums.

Crawford: Are the big museums as taken with the art?

Shenson: Oh yes. The DeYoung Museum has a Wores in their permanent collection. The Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History has fifty Indian paintings in their collection. Most major museums, including the Metropolitan Museum in New York, have Wores. In Washington, D.C., where I was in April, I went to the National Museum of American Art, the Federal Reserve Board, the White House, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Corcoran Gallery as well as Blair House. All of them have Wores paintings in their collections and I have visitation rights! [laughing]

Crawford: You donated canvases to all of them?

Shenson: Oh yes, they were given as gifts--never sold. Whenever there was an opening of the Wores exhibition at a museum or gallery we tried to attend. It always helped, because of course Wores was long since gone, and to have someone there at the opening to talk a little bit about the artist and his background was a great help.

Wores' Early Years--Studies in Munich: 1875

Shenson: Going back to Wores' early career--Toby Rosenthal was a very well-known San Francisco artist who went to Munich. His most famous painting is called "The Sleeping Cardinal." I think it was at the Legion of Honor; I don't know where it is now.

Crawford: I've never seen it.

Shenson: It is a large canvas showing a painter painting a cardinal in all his regalia. The portrait showed the cardinal sitting there very erect and looking up, I guess to God, when in reality, the model or the cardinal had gotten tired and he was sleeping. The sleeping cardinal. Very famous painting.

Toby Rosenthal's father was a bootmaker in San Francisco, and Theodores Wores' father wanted to have some work done. When Toby Rosenthal's father came to the Wores' residence he saw some sketches that young Theodore had done and he said to Mr. Wores, Senior: "You know, your son has talent. May I take a couple of these and send them over to Toby in Munich?" And he did. And to make a long story short, I think at about the age of sixteen, Theodore Wores went to Munich, Germany, to study.

Crawford: So there was never anything for him but painting.

Shenson: That's right.

[reading] "His career embraces the entire period of art development in California from the days of the vigilantes and the early artists such as Charles Nahl, Virgil Williams, Joseph Harrington, all of whom taught Wores when a boy, those sixty-five years at his easel down to today. Today, the veteran artist is still the erect, keen-minded, socially prominent gentleman as when, in 1907, he began teaching at the Art Association's School of Design. The school used to be where

the Mark Hopkins Hotel is today and was called the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art."

Crawford: Oh, that I didn't know. So he had very eminent teachers, then.

Shenson: Yes. Allen Dunn was a very important New York writer, and he wrote: "Here is man, though in every branch of his profession grounded in Old World art education--that means capacity of drawing, mastering of technique, and knowledge of color in all its branches. His career and his success is a good example to the younger knights of the brush and palette.

"Here it is, the basis of his success, allied of course to the artistic impulse and sense of value of line and color. Years of work in the Royal Academy at Munich under Professor Luhrfrentz and Alexander Wagner, and his hand at the end, a medal in both life drawing and painting classes. Then by device of his masters and a streak of wanderlust inherited in his nature, a continuation of his hard work in Paris, Venice, Florence, and Rome, applying precept to example in all the arts."

Crawford: He studied in all those places--little wonder he wanted to travel later on.

Shenson: He did, and he painted in a lot of those places although we don't have much of that work. Unfortunately we have few records of the paintings he completed in France or Italy. We know he must have painted a considerable number of canvases in Venice but we do not have any records except for a very few.

Crawford: Was he interested in Asia because of the Asian culture here?

Shenson: I am sure that being born in 1859 and growing up in San Francisco he was aware of the large Chinese community and in particular picturesque Chinatown. It was in 1881 that Wores painted one of his most famous Chinatown scenes, "San Francisco Chinatown, New Year's Day." This painting has been reproduced many times and captures a scene in San Francisco's Chinatown quite typical of those days. We have a record of several more paintings from that period, but where many of these paintings are today is unknown.

Wores became interested in Japan when he was one of the Duveneck Boys. Whistler was one of the people he met in Venice --he was in Venice doing some etchings but was down on his luck financially following the Ruskin trial--and he urged him to go to Japan.



an Fan is a Chinese Maiden. Theodore Wores. Oil on board.



Theodore Wores

New Year's in Chinatown, Chinatown, the new town of San Fran.

I think I mentioned that Duveneck [Frank Duveneck 1848-1919] was a very important person in American art history and an outstanding teacher. When Wores went to Munich he was very young, and although he studied with Professor Wagner, he also joined the group of expatriate Americans who became the "Duveneck Boys." In Venice, they loaned Whistler a printing press for his Venice etchings and he was forever grateful.

Whistler was always influenced by Japanese art, but never went to Japan. When he learned that Theodore Wores was from San Francisco, he encouraged Theodore to consider going to Japan, and I think that was one of the things that maybe precipitated Theodore doing this. This is all in the documentary film, Visual Pioneers of the 19th Century: The World of Theodore Wores.

Living and Painting in Japan: 1885-1888

Shenson: So with paintbrush and bicycle, Theodore went to Japan--it was a long trip on the ocean in those days--and landed in Yokohama. Being a foreigner, he could not travel freely in those days. It was just after Commodore Perry returned, but there was still a restriction, and I think Europeans had to stay in the European compound. Theodore was very enterprising and young, and he found a Japanese family and was hired to be a English tutor for this family's children. He had a little cottage and his bicycle, and he must have known the language because he traveled extensively. He was a little concerned because Yokohama was getting a little too "westernized," as he wrote.

So he went up to Tokyo. In those days it was spelled T-O-K-I-O. Theodore stayed there for three years. As you will read, he always maintained his own painting style; he didn't adapt the Japanese style to his Western painting, whereas some of the Japanese people adopted Theodore's Western style for their painting. He was truly revered in Japan. Before he left, there was an exhibit, sort of a fund-raiser for a school for the blind. The young crown prince of Japan came to the exhibition and was very impressed, according to newspaper articles.

When Wores left Japan in 1888, three years later, he came back to San Francisco, and then went to New York, and to London. Whistler was in London, and Oscar Wilde was in London; Theodore painted Wilde's portrait when he was here, at the

Bohemian Club. Unfortunately, however, that canvas, as well as others of the Bohemian Club, burned in the 1906 earthquake and fire.

Whistler and Oscar Wilde opened the doors of the art world in London to Theodore. Theodore actually helped form the Chelsea Arts Club which still exists today, and I have a program from the last night that Theodore was in London at the Chelsea Arts Club, bidding Theodore farewell. Everyone there that night signed the front of it.

A man from the Chelsea Arts Club came to San Francisco several years ago and wanted to see the program. He borrowed it and enlarged it, and then subsequently sent me a list of all the people that had signed it--the handwriting was difficult to read. There was Whistler's signature and his Butterfly, and it was a very, very important group of people.

Wores left Japan and [traveled to New York City and Boston, Martha's Vineyard, and London in 1889-91] where he sold all his paintings, and then went back to Japan a second time in 1892 for a year and a half. On the way the ship stopped in Honolulu, and he got off and looked around and felt that this would be a lovely place to come back to and paint, which he did in 1901. He lived in Hawaii for one year and subsequently we found out that he was actually related to the Roth family, who owned the Matson Steamship Company. This gave him an entree to the "who's who" of Hawaii.

The first major exhibition in Honolulu after Wores passed away was 1971. It was at the East-West Center on the grounds of the University of Hawaii, and it was only the Japanese paintings, the San Francisco Chinatown paintings, and there were some paintings from Samoa, done during the year he was in Hawaii when he traveled and met Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa.

Crawford: Did he keep diaries or journals?

Shenson: We have one diary when he went to the Alhambra in Spain. But you see, everything burned up in 1906. It's amazing that there's as much left as there is. But as far as sketchbooks and diaries and all that memorabilia, it was lost. Theodore was in Los Angeles, where his mother lived, at the time of the earthquake and fire with some of his paintings. Our most famous painting in Hawaii, "The Lei Maker," was with him, fortunately. We made that gift in 1986 to the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

Crawford: Are there many paintings in Honolulu?

Shenson: Yes. The woman who put the exhibition together in 1970 was Frances Allison. She had been a reporter with the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, so she knew all the people on a social level. She started making inquiries and she found many portraits before the exhibition was held.

Theodore and the Art of Portraiture

Shenson: Speaking of portraits, among some of the memorabilia I have is a telephone book from 1910. The Wores got married in 1910 and went to Hawaii for six months, and in the telephone book, I noticed little pencil checkmarks against certain names, which we finally realized had to be important people. Where there was a checkmark Wores had painted the person's portrait.

The portrait of Walter Dillingham's mother, Mrs. B. F. Dillingham, is in the collection of the Daughters of Hawaii. At the Pacific Club, there are about three or four portraits. In C. Brewer and Company's boardroom are portraits of three boardmembers. The portrait of Judge Robertson's wife is in the Bishop Museum, as are two others. I have seen portraits of Governor Archibald Scott Cleghorn, Mrs. Edward Duisenberg, Governor Walter Francis Frear, Chief Justice Alfred S. Hartwell, Mrs. George W. Sumner, E. Faxon Bishop, Joseph O. Carter, Peter C. Jones, and the Honorable Paul R. Newmann.

Crawford: I didn't know he did so many.

Shenson: Yes, Wores was basically a portrait painter, but you can't sit there all the time just doing portraits. So he painted many landscapes.

Crawford: Perhaps that's why he made a good living early, because portraits were personal and well paid for.

Shenson: Yes. One of the portraits I checked up on last month in Washington is at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. One morning my brother was on the phone and I was reading Millie Robbin's column, in which she talked about the National Trust for Historic Preservation having its annual meeting down in Coronado and the fact that the Decator House had just been given to the National Trust by the estate of Mrs. Truxton

Beale. Decator House is on Jackson Place a half a block from the White House. Apparently in the good old days, you might go to a reception in the White House, but then you went to Decator House to continue the party. The article went on to say that Mrs. Truxton Beale had been born in San Francisco, and that her name was Marie Oge, O-G-E.

Ben hung up the telephone, and I said, "Ben, look at this!" We went downstairs and there was the portrait of Marie Oge, painted by Theodore Wores. It had some watermarks on the side, so I had it restored. The day came that I took Mrs. Wores and my mother to Washington, D.C., and we took the portrait to the National Trust and presented it to James Biddle, the president.

Crawford: It's hanging there now?

Shenson: Oh yes, and we even get credit for it. Mr. Biddle was very charming, took us to lunch and all that, but he said: "Do you know we have lots of photographs of Mrs. Truxton Beale as an older woman, but I've never seen any pictures of her at this age." He was trying to be polite, but how could he be sure this really was Marie Oge. I said, "Well, here's Mrs. Wores. She knew her." Little Carrie confirmed and told him that she had a cousin Marie Wells, and the two of them were always competing with each other to see who was the most beautiful. When I came home I went through some memorabilia and there in one of our San Francisco newspapers was a full-page photograph of the portrait and a whole story about Marie Oge, Mrs. Truxton Beale.

Crawford: It is a story.

Shenson: Yes [laughing].

Crawford: What about the portrait of Carrie?

Shenson: The portrait of Carrie Bauer Wores was done in 1909, which is one year before they were married. If you remember seeing the portrait, here's this beautiful lady, but you can also see that she was not a teenager. [laughter] She was dressed very elegantly, but most importantly, "little Carrie" was less than five feet tall. She said that Theodore had her stand on a box so that she would look taller, and in that gorgeous blue gown she wore, she did!

Crawford: It was a personal portrait much in the line of the other portraits that he painted?

Shenson: Yes. The California Historical Society had another portrait that Wores did of Gertrude McFarland, who was the wife of Matteo Sandona, another well-known artist. When we loaned [Carrie's portrait] to the California Historical Society in their original headquarters on Washington Street they had the two portraits on either side of the entrance hall; they complemented each other. We gave the portrait of Mrs. Wores as a gift to the California Historical Society two years ago.

Crawford: So they were courting when it was painted.

Shenson: Well, at least that started their courting. If it hadn't started by then, that did it. [laughing]

Promoting Theodore Wores' Work and Traveling with Rose Shenson

Crawford: In the writings that Dr. Gerdts did, he said that your family to the Wores family was something like the Huntingtons to Alfred Bierstadt. It must have been a major preoccupation for your mother as well?

Shenson: Well, not too much. We did the work.

Crawford: The brothers did the work and she flew around with you.

Shenson: Yes, to some degree, but she didn't like to travel. She loved her home.

Crawford: I remember you saying that, other than New York.

Shenson: Oh yes. She first went with me in 1953 when I went to the AMA convention in Chicago. She had never been on an airplane before--that was before the jets. Even in an automobile, if we went on curving roads, she would get a little motion sickness. Well, we went and when we were going in for a landing in Chicago, it was very turbulent and she was feeling miserable, and she said, "If I ever get on the ground, I'll never go on an airplane again."

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Shenson: After Chicago we went to Washington, D.C., that was the night we saw Carol Channing in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. By that time mother was feeling better about traveling.

Often when Ben and I would go on our various trips we'd ask her to join us, and she would say: "Look out this window. I have the world right here. You go, enjoy it, come back, and tell me all about it." So she really wasn't a traveler.

Every year Mrs. Wores celebrated her birthday--it was May the twenty-eighth--and all of her lady friends would argue who would give the birthday party. She wouldn't talk about age, but she loved parties! It got a little bit confusing because one would say, "I'm going to be giving it," and the other one said, "No, I'm giving it."

So finally one year my mother said, "Why don't we just take Carrie away for her birthday?" So we took her down to Palm Springs and then each year we went to a different place for her birthday. She always would get a little excited in anticipation, would be on the telephone and say, "Now, Rose, what am I going to take?"

One particular birthday was going to be a surprise. All I told her was that we were going where it was going to be warm, so tell Ethel not to pack any heavy things. We got on the plane and she did not know where she was going until the pilot came on and said: "Welcome, sit back, and the weather in Honolulu today is eighty degrees." Carrie said: "Where are we going?" and I handed her a prescription pad on which Ben had written: "This is a prescription for a happy birthday trip to Hawaii."

She had not returned to Honolulu since her honeymoon in 1910, when she stayed at the Alexander Young Hotel. She told us that between the Alexander Young Hotel and the Moana Hotel there was nothing then but duck swamps and palm trees.

Crawford: Was that the Royal Hawaiian?

Shenson: No, the Royal Hawaiian was not up then, not in 1910.

Crawford: Was Mrs. Wores active in promoting the paintings as well?

Shenson: No, she was not.

Crawford: She was happy to have you do that.

Shenson: Yes. Knowledgeable people said if Ben and I had not gotten involved, the paintings would probably have ended up being auctioned.

Crawford: That's pretty clear. Did you inherit the paintings? Did she leave them to you?

Shenson: We did get a few. And then every so often, during Christmas or a birthday, we might get a small painting. As the work of Wores became better known and people knew we were interested in his work, the paintings began finding us. I have files here of correspondence because there's been so much publicity on Wores, and not infrequently our name is mentioned. People that happened to have one and wanted information about them would contact us. So we were able to purchase a few that way.

Acquiring "The Chinese Fishmonger": 1968#

Crawford: Let's talk about your major acquisitions of Wores' work.

Shenson: "The Chinese Fishmonger," which is in the National Museum of American Art, is really a magnificent museum-quality painting that was done in San Francisco in 1881. How did we happen to get a hold of it? Well, it's a large canvas, and when Lewis Ferbraché was writing the initial monograph relative to Wores, he mentioned that a gallery just off Madison Avenue in New York City listed in one of their brochures that they had a Theodore Wores painting called "The Chinese Fishmonger."

It was an old brochure, but when my brother was in New York City, he went into the gallery and he met Miss Elizabeth Claire. She was an older lady, and we realized later that she was very well known because she dealt with some of the most important people that purchased paintings from the Knoedler Gallery. Ben asked about "The Chinese Fishmonger," and she looked it up and told him that they still had it, although it wasn't in the gallery. She offered to get it for him, and the moment he saw it he purchased it. That was back in 1968--a long time ago now--but it gives you a little idea of how we got involved with acquiring paintings.

Crawford: Yes, it is in the video documentary about Wores.

Shenson: Did you get a chance to look at or read any of the monograph?

Crawford: Yes.

Shenson: The description of the painting said, "About every fish here is found in the San Francisco Bay." [laughter]

So when I was in Washington in April of this year for the National Museum for Women in the Arts annual gala, the director of the National Museum of American Art invited me to lunch, and I checked up on the painting and saw that it was prominently displayed in one of the permanent exhibits. When we walked into the gallery where it was hanging, there was a middle-aged couple there, and the wife was saying to her husband, "Look at those fish. They look so slimy!" [laughter] They're very realistic.

Joshua Taylor was the director at the time of the acquisition. He was interested in getting a Wores for their collection, and we suggested "The Interior of St. Marks," which was done in Venice during the Duveneck days--a beautiful canvas. He liked it very much, but he apparently had read a little bit about Wores and knew about "The Chinese Fishmonger." We sent it to him and he said, "Oh, yes. This is the one that I want." So my mother, Mrs. Wores, and I presented it to Joshua Taylor in his office for the National Museum of American Art, and he accepted it most graciously.

Crawford: I had no idea of the range of his paintings.

Shenson: You mean the "Interior of St. Mark's."

Crawford: Yes.

Shenson: On the actual canvas you can see the smoke from the candles. When my brother and I recently gave the Stanford Museum twenty-one paintings, this one was included. So they have an excellent retrospective.

Crawford: Do they have the largest collection in California?

Shenson: No. St. Francis Hospital has many more, and Triton Museum in Santa Clara has a lot. We've been spreading them around but Stanford Museum has an excellent collection.

Finding and Purchasing "A Rural Village": 1970

Shenson: The next important acquisition happened as a result of a letter from a gentleman in New York--it was way back in the late sixties, early seventies--who had gone to an auction in High Falls, New York, which I guess is around ninety miles north of Manhattan. Apparently they had all kinds of paintings and he

saw a Wores painting that he became very interested in. It was a Japanese painting and he decided to purchase it.

He knew good art when he saw it, and he had quite a collection, and he wanted to find out more about the artist; so he looked Wores up in the who's who of the art world, and there were many references to San Francisco. So he wrote to the public library, who referred him to the California Historical Society, who referred him to us. He sent us a photograph of the painting, and fortunately we had, also, a photograph of that same painting in a photograph album that we had and I corresponded with him.

When I was going to New York with my mother and Mrs. Wores between Christmas and New Year's the next year, I wrote and asked if he planned to keep the painting, and told him that my mother and the artist's widow would be coming to New York. He wrote back and said he would bring the painting down to show it to us. So, lo and behold, the day came, and he got on the train--I think it was ninety miles north of Manhattan--and came to the hotel, and wrapped up in a blanket was this painting, a lovely, lovely Japanese painting. We had a nice visit with him, and he told us about his family, et cetera. He said, however, that he was not interested in selling the painting.

Then there was a lapse of time, and when I went through some of my memorabilia at one point I thought I'd better write and see if he still intended to keep the painting, because we would have liked to add it to our collection. It seems to me he wrote back that he was happy to have it, and that was the end of it.

It was two or three years later that I received a letter from his daughter telling me that her father had passed away and in his correspondence she found some of my letters and knew that I was interested in the painting. They were trying to dispose of things and wondered whether my brother and I would be interested in purchasing it--which we did. It's up in my brother's bedroom. I think I showed it to you, remember the shrine?

Crawford: Yes.

Shenson: To take it one step further, during the time [the gentleman] was not interested in selling I asked him if he had any other contacts on the East Coast, because Wores had had a studio in the Carnegie Hall building. Wores was a member of the Salamagundi Club and he was a member of the Century Club, so he

was very well known. In fact, I think his studio in New York was next to William Merritt Chase's.

Lo and behold, he did find us a Wores painting, and the next Christmas we got a car and we went to Bogota, New Jersey, which is next to Hackensack, New Jersey. I never heard of Bogota! [laughter]

Crawford: I never did, either.

Shenson: This was December, mind you, and there was snow on the ground. Bogota might be a lot larger now--this was actually December the fifteenth, 1970. I had the name and address of the place that had the Wores painting, and so we walked through the snow on the main street, and there was a little antique shop selling mostly ceramic and glass. It was owned by a very pleasant, middle-aged European couple--and they did have some paintings.

I remember walking in and looking around on the rack, and I spotted the Wores. We looked around and asked about the painting and other things, and Mrs. Wores said to my mother, "You know, next week is Christmas. That's my Christmas present to the boys."

So she purchased it, and when the owner saw who signed the check--Mrs. Theodore Wores--and realized the artist's name was Theodore Wores, he was so excited. It was a painting called "A Rural Village" showing a figure with a donkey walking down a little path. The shopkeeper who owned it thought it was painted in Mexico, but in the background there was a little shrine so I knew, of course, that it was painted in Japan.

Crawford: Do you think you know where every Wores painting is?

Shenson: Oh no. He was so prolific, incredibly so. As I said earlier, he never did anything but paint and travel. Quite remarkable, really.

Finding "A Japanese House, Nikko, Japan": 1976

Shenson: The most important painting that we own today is the one in the living room over the sofa "A Japanese House, Nikko, Japan." It has a story unto itself. The first exhibition relative to the Wores Japanese paintings except for the one in Honolulu was at the Oakland Museum. George Neubert was the director at that

time, and he put on the most beautiful exhibition. There was an outstanding young man--I ran into him not too long ago--who did the installation. His name is Ted Cohen. You know, you can have the Mona Lisa, and unless it's properly lit and properly exhibited it doesn't show off. This one was the most outstanding, and I have pictures of the actual installation, and the beautiful, beautiful catalog that was printed.

One morning a gentleman from a gallery in New York telephoned and said that he had just acquired a painting by Theodore Wores and was wondering if we were interested in purchasing it. As he described it--my brother was talking to him--I knew exactly which one it was.

Crawford: The one in your living room.

Shenson: Yes, and we had a photograph of it, because Mr. Wores did photograph all of his major Japanese and San Francisco Chinatown paintings and fortunately, that didn't get burned in the 1906 earthquake and fire. That was a very good reference.

So, of course, my brother asked how much he wanted for the painting, and he quoted a price that was very high at that time. So we thanked him, and I called two fellows I knew in New York and asked them to stop in at the gallery and look at the canvas and tell us what they thought of it. So they did, and said it was a beautiful painting and the price was quite firm.

That was 1976, and it so happened that that year Mrs. Wores passed away and my mother didn't know if she wanted to go to New York or not, but I went because I had some commitments at the time, and my mother did go with me.

We went to the gallery, which was on Second Avenue between Fifty-fifth and Fifty-Sixth, and there were what I would call stalls for various antique dealers. They might have their own gallery elsewhere in Manhattan, but in this one building there were twenty or thirty stalls on two or three floors where people just had a small area to show things.

Crawford: Upper east side?

Shenson: Yes. Actually in those days we were staying at the St. Regis, and that was on Fifty-fifth, and Fifth Avenue. So it was very, very close walking distance.

We walked into this very large antique shop and once again there was all the crystal and the porcelains and around the sides were paintings. Even from the outside, I spotted the Wores Japanese painting--which was and is very special. So I thought I'd play it cool. We looked around, admired that one, another one, and then just sort of browsed. Finally I asked the owner about the Wores painting and he told me the price, and I said, "That's very nice. I kind of like it, but is that price firm?" When he said yes, we said, "Thank you and goodbye."

The next day, my mother and I went back and I asked if he couldn't make some adjustment, and I forgot the exact figure to be honest, but I told him we would think about it once more and come back.

So I called my brother, the businessman of the operation. [laughter] He knew the painting from the photograph, and I told him the price and that we thought we would purchase it if he agreed; he did, so the next day we went back.

Crawford: Had you identified yourself?

Shenson: No. There was no need to; although the first day we went, he had the catalog from the Oakland Museum with the Japanese paintings, and he told us that there were these two doctors out in San Francisco that collect Wores' work. [laughter] I kept a straight face.

Crawford: I thought that might have brought the price down, though.

Shenson: No, no. It would have made it higher! So then I told him we would purchase it without the frame, which I did not think was in very good condition and I wasn't terribly impressed with it. When I asked him to send the canvas to San Francisco, he said, "Are you Dr. Shenson?" I said, "Well, I'm one of the two Dr. Shensons." [laughter] At that point, he called his wife and his daughter and said that he thought if the painting had to go anywhere, he was so happy it was going back into the collection of "the Drs. Shenson." He could have said, "Why didn't you tell me in the first place?" But he was pleased, and his wife was pleased, and we corresponded for quite a while afterwards.

Interestingly enough, he said that there had been another person from Texas a week or two earlier that was very interested in that painting and she was going to give it some thought. I thought it was maybe some sort of a gimmick, but the day came when this person and her husband were here in San

Francisco visiting, and she contacted me ahead of time and said, "I understand that you got the painting that we were interested in also, and we would like to see it again." So we had them come over to our home and showed it to them.

Crawford: Oh, that was very nice.

Shenson: My mother in her wisdom wanted to keep the frame and asked to have it sent separately. So there was a little extra charge on that, which wasn't astronomical, but it was wrapped up and stored in the basement for ten or fifteen years. Through a contact that Ben and I had made on the Federal Reserve Board Art Committee, we met a young man and his wife who dealt basically in frames, and who lived in Washington, D.C. Their names are Kay Jackson and Bill Adair, and when he saw the frame he said, "This is really something terribly important. If you will send it back to me in Washington, D.C., I will refurbish it, and there will be no charge." He still has it, and when he has framing exhibitions this is part of the exhibition!

Crawford: What would be the value of the frame? The design of the frame, I imagine.

Dr. William Gerdts, Clement Conger and the White House: 1972#

Crawford: You might say something about Dr. Gerdts and Clement Conger, two important contacts.

Shenson: During the bicentennial in 1976, if you remember that time, there was a young man from the Dayton Art Institute, Michael Quick, who knew about the work of Wores, and wanted to borrow a couple of his paintings for the Dayton Art Institute, one of which was the "Interior of St. Mark's Cathedral." We loaned it to him, and afterwards, it was returned.

And then Michael Quick left the Dayton Art Institute and went down to the Los Angeles Museum of Art. They had the King Tut exhibition about that time. It happened that my mother and I were in Los Angeles and thanks to Michael we got to see this popular exhibition without waiting in line. Michael mentioned to us that Dr. William Gerdts was going to be giving a lecture to a special art group in Los Angeles and invited us to return for that. I had heard his name because he was well known even then.

After the lecture, Michael and his wife Mary invited mother and me and Bill to dinner in his apartment, and that is where we really met him for the first time. Then he came up to the Oakland Museum to lecture and Ben went over and met him there. Of course, our friendship has really grown and grown and grown. I might have mentioned that he is the most knowledgeable and the most well-known person in American art: everybody knows him; he's just a fantastic man. The only problem is that he has a word processor and a fax machine, and if I send him a fax letter, in seventy-two hours, there's a three-page, single-spaced fax in return!

Crawford: Was Theodore Wores a regional painter in your view or was he larger than that?

Shenson: Well, one person has called him an ethnohistorian: he captured on canvas a time that no longer exists. Another one called him an artist in search of the picturesque. So technically, I don't think he would be regional, rather international.

Crawford: Which of the canvases are more prized?

Shenson: The earlier ones, particularly those of San Francisco Chinatown. The Japanese period is also much prized. But interestingly enough, the period that we call the Blossom Period [1918-1938] is now extremely popular. The Triton Museum has over a dozen of these very large canvases. Their appraised value has greatly increased.

Crawford: You eventually met the State Department curator in connection with the paintings?

Shenson: Yes. The Wores paintings really opened a whole new horizon for us. When Clement Conger was the curator of the State Department rooms and the White House, he turned the State Department rooms into a museum of early Americana.

When he was out in California in 1972, he attended the National Trust for Historic Preservation annual meeting in Coronado, and he came up to San Francisco to find some work by a local artist for the White House. It was during the time the Nixons were in office, before Watergate, and he wanted to find some work by an artist representative of California, particularly of the San Francisco Bay Area. So he went to Gump's. One thing led to another, and he was told about the artist Theodore Wores.

Crawford: Was Wores represented there?

Shenson: No, but he was told about the artist and told about Ben and Jess Shenson, so he contacted us and over the next few years we became very, very good friends and we had many visits to the White House. While he was in San Francisco he went through some of our Wores' paintings of this area, particularly of Land's End, and finally chose three that he liked to be considered for the White House.

My brother was going to Atlantic City to a medical meeting, so he stopped in Washington, D.C. and he took with him the three paintings that Clem was interested in. Being the diplomat that he was, he said, "You know, I can't decide. Leave them here and I'll select one and send the others back." Of course, the phone rang a couple weeks later and Clem asked to keep all three. We couldn't say no to the White House, so that is why there are three Theodore Wores paintings in the White House today.

Crawford: Where are they hanging?

Shenson: They keep moving within the White House depending upon the administration in office. Initially, we were invited to have dinner with the Nixons the day after Mother's Day--I remember because we had taken mother and Mrs. Wores to Trader Vic's for dinner, took them home, and then went to the airport. We arrived and took a little siesta at the hotel, and then got up, and as I was getting cleaned up, Ben had the television on and learned that Governor Wallace had just been shot. Of course, that quadrupled the security at the White House when we went there. I remember we did not go in the main entrance, the front portico that you always see photographed, but the back entrance of the White House which is sort of the receiving area for dignitaries. Security was so tight and we had to show them our identification and the invitation. I asked to have the invitation back and they said they would return it later, but never did, of course.

The dinner was very nicely handled. It was basically for people that had given artwork to the White House, people in the art world and museum world. They had young people from the army, navy, and marines on hand, and it was almost as if you were assigned one or two because you were standing there having a drink and suddenly one of them would come up and talk to you. So even if you might not have known anybody there, you had someone to talk with, though fortunately we did know several people.

It was a very very unusual evening, and because these were people in world of art, we were even taken to the Lincoln Bedroom and saw the original Lincoln Gettysburg Address. So whereas a lot of people visit the White House, we were in every room.

There was a delightful buffet, and all of sudden I said to my brother, "Listen. What's that noise?" This was, of course, summer. I never realized it, but they do get electrical storms in Washington, D.C., and this was the most horrendous downpour of rain you could ever imagine. Nobody seemed to be bothered with it; it just poured. Fortunately, our hotel was the Hilton, which was not more than three blocks from the White House.

The party went on, the Nixons came down, and Pat was so nice and the President was very charming; he spoke and then visited with everybody. Then Clem, when the crowd started to thin out, said, "Wait until everybody leaves," which we did. And then he took us down to the West Wing of the White House, where on the wall just outside the boardroom were two of the Wores paintings. They were all of Land's End, and they had put one pair together, and then just outside the Oval Office was the third one.

Crawford: Did the president know about the art?

Shenson: No, he didn't seem to. It was fairly crowded. He didn't say too much; he was just so pleased to have them in the collection.

I remember that when Clem took us to the front portico and we started walking away, the storm had cleared, and it was a full moon and a gorgeous night. Everything smelled so fresh and clean, and I looked back, and there was the White House bathed in white light, and the full moon--oh, I tell you--a night to remember! [laughs]

Soon after, Clem retired and Rex Scouten became curator. He was the chief usher for several administrations and worked under Clem. And then he became the curator. So every time we've been in Washington, we've always had an hour's visit with Rex, usually downstairs in the library. Three years ago, as we were walking up the front portico, one of the guards was out there walking with a dog. It was Ranger, the male dog that President and Mrs. Bush kept from Millie's litter.

The Bushes were just going to be going to Camp David. Rex said, "Well, come on in and sit down." But then they called us and said, "Come out and see the Bushes." The helicopter came right down and Mrs. Bush took Ranger. One of the security men had put the dog in something like a duffel bag, and the dog wasn't very happy being cramped in. When Mrs. Bush came along she took the dog out of the bag, put him in her arms, and then walked on to the helicopter.

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Shenson: When I was in Washington this year for the tenth anniversary of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Rex knew I was coming so we had a date for lunch. It must have been the day before I was going home, and I think it was a one o'clock lunch date at the White House. At five minutes before one I was at the front gate and gave the guard my driver's license so he could check my birthdate. The guard said, "Here, please pick up the phone," and someone then said he was very distressed to tell me that Rex Scouter was in the hospital. He had been on the tennis court and had suffered a medical problem. Normally Rex would play tennis every morning, usually with his doctor. So my lunch date was cancelled. But I've tried to keep in touch with Rex. There's an acting curator now.

Crawford: Because he's still recovering.

Shenson: Yes, but he was going to retire on April 30th, and this happened maybe just ten days before.

Crawford: What a wonderful job.

Shenson: Oh yes. And he was so knowledgeable. He had a great personal friendship with all the presidents and first ladies of several administrations.

Museum Acquisitions--The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Wores' "Street in Ikaō": 1973##

Crawford: Let's talk more about some of the placing of paintings--the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for example--how did that come about?

Shenson: Yes, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has a Theodore Wores painting in their permanent collection. For this story we have to go way back. We had been contacted by the Kennedy Gallery

in New York City relative to a retrospective exhibition of Theodore Wores and so there was an exhibit of Wores' work there in 1971. The curator of American art at the Metropolitan Museum came and asked if we would give "Street in Ikaao" as a gift to the Museum. We thanked him and said we wanted to keep the painting in our own collection for the time being--we had bought the painting from John Howell in San Francisco. We restricted the sale of the paintings in that exhibit to the few that we wanted to dispose of, and it was several years later in 1973 that thanks to Dr. William Gerdts and Dr. Carrie Rebora of the Museum that we did give the Metropolitan "Street in Ikaao" that they had requested in 1971.

Crawford: Was the family involved with other painters?

Shenson: No, we were more involved with the performing artists rather than painters.

Crawford: Did you know the work of Nahl and the other California artists of the time?

Shenson: We collected some of Wores' contemporaries, but have disposed of them or given them away because we've decided to be specialists in just the one artist.

An Exhibit in Japan and Lizzie Victor and "The Lei Maker" Find a Home in Hawaii: 1988

Crawford: Are you pleased with the exposure that Wores has today?

Shenson: Absolutely. Of course, nothing is perfect. If one door closed, another door opened. Not everybody just jumped on the bandwagon. I can remember being in Hawaii at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. We had had the exhibit in 1971 and we thought "The Lei Maker" which is the epitome of old Hawaii should belong to the Honolulu Academy of Arts so that all the people of Hawaii could enjoy it. We asked the then director if he'd be interested in seeing it and perhaps we would give it to the Academy and he said, "No, I'm not really interested in this man's [work]."

Crawford: Why?

Shenson: He just wasn't interested. He'd never seen it. But he just wasn't interested.

Crawford: But they finally got their Wores painting. Would you like to talk about "The Lei Maker," since that's such an important one?

Shenson: Yes, "The Lei Maker" was the focal point of this exhibition in 1971 at the East-West Center that I have mentioned. When the director of the Academy wasn't even interested in looking at it, we loaned it to the Bishop Museum and they had it on loan for several years and were thrilled to have it. Then when the Asahi Shimbun came to us in 1985 and said they would like to have a retrospective exhibition of Wores in Japan, we felt that "The Lei Maker" was very important and should be included, so we gave permission for them to borrow it from the Bishop Museum for the exhibition.

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Shenson: Incidentally, the exhibition opened in Tokyo and then went to Yokahama and Kyoto, and as many as three thousand people lined up to see these paintings each day, particularly the ladies--they just were absolutely overwhelmed. They would just get as close to the paintings as they could, because, as we said, Wores was an excellent historian. He captured on canvas a time that no longer existed. They had cameras back there in those very early days, but they were like tintypes--black and white--and to see these canvases in living color made it just incredible.

My brother and I were at the opening of the Asahi Shimbun's exhibition in Tokyo in 1986, and we were treated like royalty. There was a limousine waiting for us when we arrived at the airport with a flag on either side of the fenders, and then another car for luggage. As we were going towards Tokyo and the hotel, my brother and I noticed that every so many yards there was a guard standing there. We thought we were being royally received--until we got to the hotel to find out that the President of the United States had just left. They had a summit meeting and the President had just left Japan. [laughter] The opening ceremony of the Wores exhibition was on television. We had gold scissors to cut the red ribbon--it was very formal!

Crawford: Since Wores wasn't well known he wouldn't have been collected much at all without your efforts, isn't that true?

Shenson: Yes, that's right. I guess we get a little credit.

While we were in Japan, we thought we would find some Wores paintings over there, and the portrait I mentioned of Count Ito. We found documentary evidence that it had burned in one

of the many fires--they have had so many fires and so many earthquakes in Japan. We did not find any Wores paintings in Japan.

The exhibit, as I remember, opened on a Thursday; on Sunday, they took Ben and I in a car with an interpreter to the place where they thought Wores had lived and many other areas where Wores had painted, including the Iris Gardens of Hori-Kiri. We were there at the time the iris were all in bloom, and I swear I stood where Theodore stood when he painted the picture, "Iris Gardens of Hori-Kiri."

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Shenson: Then when it came time for them to return the paintings from Japan, my brother and I had talked to the new director at the Academy, and he said he would do anything to get "The Lei Maker" on loan at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

So after the trip to Japan, "The Lei Maker" was returned to the Honolulu Academy of Arts, and it was given as a promised loan. Usually a promised loan is eventually given as a gift. Sometimes, however, people then change their minds and take it back.

Crawford: It's like a gentleman's agreement; there's no contract.

Shenson: No contract. But as I mentioned, the Sunday after we came home from Honolulu in 1986, I was sitting here, Ben was sitting there--[laughs]--and Ben went to the phone and called George Ellis, the director, and said, "It's no longer a promised loan; it's yours for the Academy."

Now, I should tell you the story of Lizzie Victor, the model who sat to do that portrait. Oh, this is a whole chapter.

Lizzie Victor and her family lived on the Big Island. I think it has been printed so I can repeat the story that Lizzie was fathered by King Kalakaua. They called him the Merry Monarch [laughs].

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Shenson: Following the East-West exhibition of Wores paintings in 1971, my brother had occasion to be visiting Honolulu and while having lunch at the Pacific Club, he was introduced to Mr. Herbert Shipman. Mr. Shipman was anxious to meet Ben and told him that his uncle had been married to Lizzie Victor's mother.

The Shipman family has lived on the island of Hawaii for many years, and this would have been a second marriage for O.T. Shipman, who had grown children from his first marriage. Lizzie became part of that family, and although she never married, she adopted three children, Hawaiian style, which is referred to as "hanai," not a legal adoption. Lizzie Victor raised these children, one of whom lives in Illinois.

When we gave "The Lei Maker" as a gift to the Academy of Arts, they had a special party for the event, and Governor Ariyoshi and his wife were there as were many of the "old guard." The adopted daughter from Illinois flew to Honolulu for the reception as well.

Another Lizzie Victor story: as often as I could I vacationed in Hawaii, where I have many good friends, and one evening in 1970 I was invited to dinner at the Mahoneys. I took the hostess a copy of a recent book about Wores, in which there was a reproduction of "The Lei Maker." One of the guests told me she was a writer for Honolulu Magazine, and said the magazine should use the painting on the Christmas cover. I agreed, and she said she would be in touch with me.

About three days later, she phoned and said, "I was just reading a book and suddenly I remembered about that painting you have and I want to follow up on it." And she did. In December of 1970, "The Lei Maker" appeared on the cover of Honolulu Magazine and she had written an article. Laurie Hover was her name, and she wrote: "Lizzie--who in Hawaii might know of the beautiful girl who graces our cover? And how many know of Theodore Wores who painted her?"

Crawford: Did they find her?

Shenson: No, the painting was done in 1901, and she had passed away. But someone who knew her was Richard Kenji Kimble. His family owned the Halekulani Hotel, and he told about her sitting out on the lawn of the hotel during "Boat Day," stringing flower leis. There were several other letters to the editor telling about Lizzie Victor and the Victor family.

President Clinton Gives "The Iris Gardens" to Japan: 1995

[Interview 3: June 6, 1997]##

Crawford: Another painting found a home in Japan.

Shenson: Yes. In the fall of 1995 I was contacted by the State Department in Washington, D.C., as to whether I would consider giving them a gift of a Theodore Wores Japanese painting. My brother passed away in August of 1995, so this was September or October.

I thought it might be the Art in Embassies Program, which Roselyne Swig is head of. They have a collection of American paintings, and the various embassies or ambassadors from the United States can ask to have paintings in their residences. We had given them, I think, two or three at that time--that's before Roselyne was involved--but this organization that called me relative to the Japanese painting was totally different. It was the State Department.

So I sent them three photographs, and they contacted Bill Adair and asked him to frame "Iris Gardens, Hori-Kiri, Tokyo." What he did was to copy the frame that had our original Japanese painting in it that we bought in New York many years earlier. When I was in Washington, D.C., I saw the completed frame and it was most handsome. Soon after that I received an invitation from the Prime Minister of Japan to come over for lunch on the day when President Clinton was to meet with the Emperor of Japan and present the painting to him as a gift from the United States!

Crawford: What a surprise!

Shenson: Unfortunately it was just at the time when we had a terrible budget crunch, and everything in Washington, D.C. closed down, so the Clintons cancelled their trip. Then in April of last year I got another letter from the Japanese prime minister informing me that they had rescheduled the presentation. I happened to be in Washington, D.C. at the time, and I left word with the State Department that if the Clintons wanted me to go with them on Air Force One--[laughter]

Crawford: Good for you!

Shenson: I never heard from them, but the Clintons did go.

Crawford: You didn't really expect a seat on Air Force One.

Shenson: No, and it's a long ways to go for lunch. I did get a letter from the President dated December 26, 1995--very informal--"Dear Jess, Thank you so much for your generous donation of Theodore Wores' 'Iris Gardens, Hori-Kiri, Tokyo.' I will be proud to present this beautiful painting as a gift from the United States Government to the Emperor and Empress of Japan when Hillary and I visit Tokyo. Hillary and I send our best holiday wishes and our gratitude for your exceptional act of kindness."

Crawford: Quite personal.

Shenson: Yes, absolutely. Here it is [shows photo]. The painting itself is a beautiful, bright thing. It was a personal gift to the emperor, and this shows the presentation box. The Japanese are rather formal, and they have presentation boxes, so Bill made this container, covered it with old Japanese paper. When you lift up the cover, under glass, set in dark blue velvet, is the painting. You can open up the glass and take it out.

Crawford: That's a good story.

Shenson: Can you read the label? It says, "Presented to Their Imperial Majesties, the Emperor and Empress of Japan, from the President of the United States of America and Mrs. William J. Clinton." Up above, it has Theodore Wores' name and his dates.

Crawford: Have you seen this painting in Japan?

Shenson: No, I have not seen it in Japan. But it had a tremendous amount of publicity in the Japanese newspapers.

Crawford: Do they recognize that he was one of the first of our artists to go to Japan?

Shenson: Yes. President Clinton, when he presented the painting to the Emperor, said that the painting was by an American artist done before the turn of the century one hundred and ten years ago of the Iris Gardens of Hori-Kiri, Japan; and the Emperor said, "Yes, I know exactly where they are--they're still there."

The Hawaiian Exhibition of 1994##

Shenson: I mentioned before that in 1994 we did have an exhibit at the Honolulu Academy of Arts of just the Japanese paintings by Wores. In Hawaii that year was considered the "Year of the Japanese." They've had the "Year of the Chinese," they've had the "Year of the Hawaiians," but that year was the "Year of the Japanese," and I think it celebrated one hundred years since the first contract was signed for Japanese labor. The whole year was devoted to the art of Japan.

III MEDICAL SCHOOL AND MEDICAL PRACTICE

Choosing Stanford and Stanford Medical School

Crawford: Let's go on to medicine now; please tell me what exposure you had to doctors and medicine when you were boys. You mentioned a Dr. Boskowitz.

Shenson: George Boskowitz, yes. Dr. Boskowitz had his office at 909 Hyde Street across the street from St. Francis Hospital, and he was the family doctor. He was rather short, very stocky, and had a personality that radiated. He never gave appointments to patients; people would go to his office, which had a large reception room, and sit and wait their turn. I think a lot of ladies used it as sort of a gathering place. [laughter] He lived at the Cathedral Apartments, on the corner of Jones and California. Are you familiar with that building?

Crawford: Yes.

Shenson: It seems to me he even had a car and driver. Of course, this was a long time ago, but he just ruled the roost. If Dr. George Boskowitz said, "This is what you do, Louis," my father did it; he never questioned it. Nobody questioned him. When he knew my brother was in medical school, he made overtures that when Ben finished and got his M.D., he might come into his office. It was not the type of thing that my brother was interested in, so that never came to pass, but I guess that my first recollection of a doctor was of him.

Crawford: Had your parents urged you to become doctors?

Shenson: No. Not in the least bit. The only thing was that when my brother was going to high school my father said, "The one thing I never want you to do is become an attorney." [laughter] He must have had some poor experiences. He didn't want him to

come into the meat business either. Ben said early on that he wanted to be a professional person and he thought he would like to become a doctor. In fact, I might have referred already to Dr. George DeForest Barnett, who was, as we say, the great white father at the San Francisco General Hospital. In those days, you might remember, Stanford and UC divided the General Hospital, which we then called the County Hospital out on 22nd and Portrero. They each had their own floors and their own wards and everything. Dr. Barnett was the man in charge of Medicine at the County Hospital for the Stanford service. He lived on the Stanford campus and commuted every day, and is today one of the most revered person that Stanford has ever had.

As far as Stanford is concerned, it was our home away from home. But, of course, you see, Ben was ahead of me. I had gotten my A.B. in 1942 during the Second World War. Then I was drafted in '43, went into the infantry in the aid station, got out in 1945, and went into medical school in 1945 and got my M.D. in 1950. So there is five and a half years difference in our age, but ten years difference academically.

Ben got his A.B. in 1936 and his M.D. in 1940. During the Second World War, as I might have mentioned already, he and another doctor, Clarence Tinsley, lived in the General Hospital and taught medical students. In '47 or '48 Ben went into private practice in San Francisco.

Crawford: And what was your first impression of Stanford or your first exposure to Stanford?

Shenson: I almost can remember the day. I guess we were in the family automobile, a Chandler, if you can remember what those cars were.

Crawford: A Chandler?

Shenson: Oh, yes, there's a photograph upstairs of the four of us driving through the famous redwood tree in Yosemite. That's a Chandler. Well, the day my father drove his son, Ben, my mother, and me down Palm Drive was a very special day. We drove to Encina Hall, where in those days all freshmen men had to live, and Ben had a room by himself in the basement. I think most of the rooms were single rooms, but then some students would have a roommate.

For fifty dollars Ben bought an upright piano and had that upright piano there, as I mentioned, and for another fifty dollars he bought a Model T Ford. So he was quite the man about

campus. He was the official accompanist for the Glee Club at Stanford, and he was a very good student. He actually only had three years of pre-med, which is unusual.

It was the days of the Wow Boys, and they went down to the Rose Bowl and had a great time. I think they were all traveling by bus, and while Ben was away he found out he had been admitted to medical school at Stanford. So that was a wild night. He said they were celebrating winning the Rose Bowl and his getting into medical school. They had a little too much wine, and then sitting in the back seat of the bus he got sick. [laughter]

So he started medical school, and he lived on campus in a very nice, small home. As a matter of fact, I guess Herbert Hoover had already come back to the campus, and Herbert Hoover lived just around the corner from where Ben did, so they would pass each other not infrequently in the mornings taking walks. Subsequently, Herbert Hoover was a patient of my brother.

Dr. Dwight Wilbur, whose father was Ray Lyman Wilbur and who just passed away last year, was our mother's doctor. We were so close to him, and when the next Shenson Visiting Professor comes, I'm going to request that it be done in honor of Dr. Dwight Wilbur.

Crawford: This is the person who does the grand rounds?

Shenson: He does grand rounds, but he comes for a week and works with medical students and the house staff on aspects of old-fashioned medicine: how to take a history and examine a patient, et cetera.

Crawford: Do you choose this person?

Shenson: No, a committee in the medical school chooses. One time it might be a cardiologist, another time it might be a gastroenterologist--someone who has to do with internal medicine. On Thursday of the week they are at Stanford they do have Grand Rounds and all of the students, house staff, and faculty attend. I have a list of the former visiting professors, which now number seventeen, and it reads like a who's who of the medical world.

Crawford: This has been going on for twelve years.

Shenson: Yes. But back to Ben. As an undergraduate he was always busy studying and his outlet was music. Then he got into medical school, and in those days, even when I went to medical school,

the first four quarters were on campus--in other words, a year and one quarter. I don't know if you remember the buildings. Behind the museum were the anatomy building and the chemistry building. After the fourth quarter, everyone came to San Francisco to Clay and Webster to continue medical school.

Crawford: Did the medical school leave to go back to Stanford in the early fifties?

Shenson: Yes. That was quite a change.

Crawford: Did you have any particular mentors that you remember? How about fraternity life?

Shenson: No, neither one of us joined a fraternity. After Encina, there were the resident halls. Do you remember Branner and Toyon for the men?

Crawford: Oh, yes.

Shenson: And there were the eating clubs. We belonged to El Tigre eating club. Neither of us have ever been joiners. Even in San Francisco, we never joined any clubs.

Crawford: Were you opposed to joining?

Shenson: No. We didn't have to--we had a very, very busy life. Of course, in those earlier days, a lot of people joined clubs to meet people or for professional reasons. That's something we never had to do.

Crawford: What would you say about your undergraduate days?

Shenson: I think the undergraduate days were interesting, but a lot of work.

Crawford: Did you have much in the way of humanities in those days?

Shenson: Not too much, no. As a matter of fact, there was hardly anything even relating to an art department. The museum was there, as you know, and unless you wanted to see what Leland Stanford, Jr., had for his last breakfast before he died of typhoid fever you never went there. [laughter]

Crawford: It had that sort of reputation.

Shenson: It was sort of an old, stodgy building. There was not any real art department. Jan Popper, whose name you might remember, was the head of the music department.

Crawford: Oh, certainly.

Shenson: He had a course in music appreciation and, I guess, some students, but it was a small campus. It was The Farm, as you remember--really the farm. Now I go down there and I get lost, because you can't drive here and you can't drive there. It's a big city, now. I've had to be there several times recently, and one evening I got there a little early and started walking around by the bookstore--the new bookstore, and I tell you it was hard for me to realize that these were Stanford students, because in our day one dressed a little bit more appropriately. [laughter]

When my father passed away in 1950, we established the Louis Shenson Memorial Loan Fund for Stanford Medical Students --primarily for those in the third and fourth year and those who had gone through Stanford. This has been maintained since 1950, and when my mother passed away in 1983 we added her name to that Fund.

Then we established the Shenson Visiting Professorship several years ago, and every year we have two or three. Originally, we were hoping--and we did for the first year or two or three--have one person come for a full month and really sort of dig in. But it's hard to get people of that caliber that can take off for one month and come to Stanford. Now it's either two or three that will come for a week or ten days. It has worked out very well. Then as I mentioned to you I've just established the Ben Shenson Society in memory of my brother. So we keep very active. This Society is for third- and fourth-year medical students who plan to go into internal medicine. There is also the Shenson-Elsbach scholarship.

We have also given the "new" museum twenty-one Wores paintings that they selected, and the exhibition Pacific Arcadia opens there the beginning of '99 and will include some Wores paintings.

I think the museum is going to be the most important museum on the West Coast when it finally does open, because not only is the building being totally retrofitted and remodeled, but a very philanthropic family in Los Angeles who had given the Rodin sculptures for the Rodin Garden, have also given several million dollars for a new addition for the museum.

Besides the paintings I gave last year I've given them a substantial amount of additional money relative to the building.

I think I might have mentioned that I gave four modest scholarships to the music department and this year increased it to ten scholarships.

Crawford: That is for medical students?

Shenson: For students in the Music Department who are premedical.

Wartime Service at Camp White and in the Pacific: 1943-1945

Crawford: Let us move on to your wartime service--Camp White, as I remember.

Shenson: My army record at the very beginning was a little bit mixed up, because if you remember those days, all of the young men who were inducted had to go into basic training for a period of time. I got drafted, and I was inducted down in Monterey. I was assigned for some basic training at Camp Beal, close to San Luis Obispo, and then sent to the 96th Division in Camp White, Oregon.

When I got there I realized that here I was in a Division that had been activated several years earlier, and every other person except for little old me had gone through basic training--had done everything--and here I was, just placed right there. To this day, I can never figure out how all this happened. [laughter]

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Shenson: But I survived. I made several very good friends. I was in what they called an aid station, and besides carrying a rifle as an infantryman I had been assigned also to an aid station if anybody was sick or injured. It wasn't too long before we were told that we were going to be going overseas to the Pacific.

One of my closest friends at Camp White was Frank McKelvy. Frank had been a set designer and decorator for Paramount Studios. His father had worked in the studios and Frank carried on, working for Paramount for many years. When he got out of the service he worked for Disney Studios.

Frank passed away several years ago, but I remember when he invited me to the Academy Awards one year when he was nominated, and I remember sitting in the same row as Gregory Peck, who won the Oscar that year for the movie To Kill a

Mockingbird. Last year Gregory Peck was over at Cal Performances, and there was a little reception afterwards, so I reminded him that I was sitting near him at those Awards ceremonies.

The time came when all of the 96th Division got on a troop transport in San Francisco and in the dark of night sailed through the Golden Gate Bridge. Frank said to me, and I said to Frank, "If we ever come sailing back, we'll get on the Lurline and go to Hawaii as civilians."

Crawford: And you did?

Shenson: And we did, yes. We went in 1944.

Crawford: So you were posted to Hawaii?

Shenson: Yes. It sounded very glamorous going to Hawaii. When we got there, and I can remember like it was yesterday, they put us in a train, which was an open cart like a gondola. There were no seats or anything and it was uncovered! I guess maybe they used to transport sugar beets or sugar cane in these long, long open railway cars.

So anyway, the whole group was put in and we were taken to Scofield Barracks (Scofield Barracks are still there--a permanent installation) and I thought, "Oh, this is going to be fine," until we kept going and going. Suddenly we were at Scofield Barracks and we saw the huts that the Japanese had originally been evacuated to, and this was to be our home away from home. The soil was red and everything you touched was red, so that it was impossible to wash anything--we could never get it clean.

Then a few of us were sent away from the barracks over to the other side of the island, over on the Kailua side, to learn to give jungle training. When I left, all my buddies felt so bad about my having to learn jungle training, but as it turned out, it was a utopia because the other side of the island was much more green and the ocean was very nice and the beaches were excellent. It was almost like a vacation.

What the Division would do was bring in several hundred recruits each day and they would go through certain jungle training tactics, but it was very pleasant. It just so happened that I knew some people in Honolulu, and when I was able to get away on a legal leave I would go to Waikiki. One of my friends was pure-blooded Hawaiian; his wife was a great mixture, as so many of them are in Hawaii. But Mama and Daddy

Bray were well-known; even to this day the old Kamainas remember the name.

The day came that we were shipped out on a troop transport and were to invade Yap. We were on the blue Pacific for many, many days and it seemed to be like weeks and eventually seemed like months. Then the orders were changed, and of course, being low down the totem pole, we weren't privy to a lot of these things until it was all quite final. Then the word came that we were to invade Leyte, and many weeks later we were put in amphibious units and invaded the beach of Leyte on October 20, 1944. The Japanese were there waiting for us; they knew we were coming.

Crawford: Was there gunfire?

Shenson: There was, but fortunately there were no casualties in our unit the day of the invasion. The invasion of Leyte was the day before General MacArthur waded on the beach and said, "I have returned." I got there the day before he did. [laughter]

Crawford: I know you kept a journal. Were you writing home all the time to your parents?

Shenson: Oh, yes.

Crawford: Was there apprehension?

Shenson: No, I guess I was really too young to think about it. Yank magazine reported all about the Leyte invasion.

Crawford: What was your assignment?

Shenson: Oh, just as an infantrymen, but we had to set up aid stations for anyone that was injured.

Crawford: So you had a medical service there as well?

Shenson: Yes, but there were M.D.s attached to it. I forgot all about the letters I must have written home. We were in Leyte for quite a while, and then I was sent down to New Guinea because I developed hepatitis.

Crawford: From water?

Shenson: Yes, water or some contamination. It was not uncommon to have this, particularly where a lot of people lived together in close quarters. I was evacuated to New Guinea, and then from

New Guinea, sent home. I would have been in New Guinea a month or two. When Roosevelt died--President Roosevelt--it seems to me I was in New Guinea when that announcement came. Then I came here to Letterman Hospital.

Crawford: You were quite ill.

Shenson: Well, I was much better, but there were some little complications. I was discharged in August of 1945.

Crawford: So then you came back to Stanford? Had you been admitted to Stanford?

Shenson: No, because I didn't know when I was getting out of the service. When I got home I was awfully thin. When my father saw me he got scared. Having been on adabrin, which all of us had to take to prevent malaria, I was jaundiced. My color wasn't that great, I guess. It wasn't too long until I was home at 58 Palm Avenue and happy to be there.

I sometimes get a bit emotional about things, and I do when I think about coming home on a hospital ship. The captain was a European with a German accent and every night when we were at sea and it was dark he would say, "Dump the garbage." That meant they could get rid of all the garbage that was accumulated during the day, and the last night out he said that it was the last night that he was going to say, "dump the garbage!" We had to wait out beyond the Farallons, which I couldn't see, but I could see San Francisco as a faint silhouette. It was just about dawn and the sun was starting to come up over Oakland as we sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge.

Crawford: I can imagine the emotions.

Shenson: What's the name of the well-known singer who sang "God Bless America?"

Crawford: Kate Smith?

Shenson: Yes, a recording of Kate Smith singing "God Bless America" was played and that was really a very, very emotional moment!

Crawford: And your family was there, of course, on the dock waiting.

Shenson: No, but they were at Letterman General Hospital waiting for me.

Crawford: Were there a lot of disabled veterans there?

Shenson: Not too many. The really seriously ill ones were flown to Hawaii and they were kept there. Tripler General Hospital in Honolulu was a tremendous hospital.

Coming Home to Stanford Medical School: 1945-1950

Crawford: And then you knew that you wanted to go back to Stanford.

Shenson: Oh, yes, yes.

Crawford: Let's talk about your medical school career and any special mentors and what it was like being at the Stanford facility in San Francisco.

Shenson: I was just a medical student, but I will always remember it. There were only sixty students to a class, and my class was one of the first after the Second World War. I started medical school in the fall of 1945. The first few quarters were on the Stanford campus and then all of us went up to San Francisco (Stanford Lane) to finish medical school.

In my class there were sixty students, and we were always placed in alphabetical order. It was a very close-knit family of sixty.

My class was a little unusual, however--being the first after the Second World War, there were a large number of women and there was also a group of fellows from ASTP and V12. ASTP was the army contingent and V12 was the navy contingent of young people just entering into the service before the end of the Second World War that were drafted that had what was thought to be an aptitude for medicine. After they were through medical school, they had to give some time to whatever service they were in.

My class had at least ten to twelve women, the V12 and the ASTP fellows, and then the older ones like me that had been in the service. So it was a rather mixed group, but we still got along very, very well. As I told you, I came up to San Francisco after the first four quarters. Fortunately, I was

able to live at home, and just kept busy trying to stay in medical school and get through medical school.

Crawford: What was the clientele like at the hospital? Was that a poor population?

Shenson: There were the two hospitals: Stanford Lane at Clay and Webster was a private hospital, but also had clinics. I volunteered in the medical outpatient clinic every Monday morning after I got my M.D. In those clinics there were not too many indigent patients.

The County Hospital, which is now called the General Hospital, was definitely for the indigent population and worked out very well from a teaching standpoint because you would not get a lot of these people with their diagnoses in a private hospital. This was one of the great concerns when the medical school moved back to Stanford: Where would they find the patients that were indigent for the medical school to use for teaching purposes?

Of course they did have the Veterans Hospital close by, and now they go down to San Jose, so that is no longer a major problem. But, for instance, Ward G, which was the men's medical ward at the County Hospital, was just one tremendously long open ward--bed, bed, bed, bed--and for some very sick ones they did have a private room. Dr. Barnett was in charge of Ward G, and the training that you got there was just absolutely the very best! I have a photograph of Dr. Barnett and Dr. Leo Eloesser, whom you mentioned, on Ward G with the medical students and house staff. It is a classic! One got the very best of training.

Most of the medical school basic classes were at Clay and Webster. I did take my internship at the San Francisco County Hospital--a rotating internship.

Crawford: What was that like?

Shenson: It just couldn't be better, absolutely the best possible training! At Stanford, in those days, you had to complete your internship before you got your M.D., so technically my brother finished medical school in '39 but he didn't get his M.D. until '40. I finished medical school in '49 but didn't get my M.D. until '50.

After you graduated you were free to go anywhere for your last year of internship, and so I was able to stay at the San Francisco County Hospital, which was the one that most people

wanted. You could take a surgical internship but most of them were just rotating internships. You had a month on pediatrics, a month on TB, or a month on surgery, a month on women's medicine. After my internship I went down to the Fresno General Hospital for one year of residency. That was a very delightful year, and I enjoyed it very much, but then I had my brother waiting for me to join him in the practice of medicine!

Crawford: Another doctor I interviewed had an ethical problem with all the surgery done at County--too much of it was unnecessary, he thought--just to train interns. Well, what was the toughest time of that whole study period?

Shenson: Just a lot of hard work, and you had to be dedicated to medicine. In my class, maybe a little bit more because there was a group that were older. Very few medical students were married in those days. It was difficult to have two lives. Today, of course, it's totally different, but then medicine was a hard task-master. You couldn't do both and do them both well.

Crawford: Neither one of you thought of getting married while you were students.

Shenson: No, and if you did you were the exception to the rule. Of course today the delivery of health care is totally different. You basically have hours. Maybe this is better; maybe the other was better, I don't know, but in those days that was the way it was.

Crawford: Did you live at the hospital when you were you on call?

Shenson: No, but the fact that I lived in San Francisco helped. They did not have any quarters either at Stanford Lane Hospital or the County Hospital, but if you were on twenty-four-hour call then you stayed in the hospital where rooms were available.

Crawford: You stayed in the hospital?

Shenson: Oh, yes. In the County Hospital administration building they did have some rooms where you could stay, and I stayed many, many, many nights.

Crawford: Are there any patients that stand out for you particularly?

Shenson: Next week I'm seeing a patient that my brother took care of in 1948. Bernice was a patient in the TB service and she is still a patient. That's a long time ago. [laughs]

Crawford: She recovered?

Shenson: Yes, fortunately! She still comes to see me, as does her husband, her sister, and her sister-in-law. These are a few of the people that my brother wanted to keep as patients. That's why he decided to see a few on a Tuesday afternoon and why I would see a few on a Wednesday afternoon after we retired from the active practice of medicine. Now I see the "old-timers," all on Wednesdays.

Crawford: Your brother did his internship and residency at County Hospital?

Shenson: Ben did everything right at the County Hospital. After the medical school moved to the campus each of us individually would go down one morning a week and work in the medical clinic with the students.

Crawford: How did the patient population change when they moved back to Stanford?

Shenson: Well, it was more of a white-collar-type of person who would come in to the clinics. Of course, there were some indigent, but not many. Nothing like it was in San Francisco.

Crawford: Were the clinics free?

Shenson: I think there was some registration fee and maybe a modest amount for a visit, and maybe if you had to buy medicine there was some charge. It varied depending upon ability to pay.

Crawford: People didn't have insurance in those days, did they?

Shenson: Not as much. No. Not like now. Oh, no. So that's really changed the whole delivery of health care. The campus was interesting, but the city really was where the action was. Of course Norman Shumway was one of the early people in cardiology there; Dr. Frank Gerbode--a pioneer in open heart surgery; Emil Holman--the great white father of surgery; Fritz Reichert; Victor Richards--all are legendary people in medicine--and they were at Stanford too. Dr. Loren Chandler was the dean of the medical school at that time.

Remembering the Medical School Faculty

Crawford: Maybe we could talk about some of those personalities.

Shenson: It would be hard to describe them, really. They were just legends in their own time, just a different breed for some reason. Dr. Chandler, the dean of the medical school, was a tall, bright, handsome fellow, who just could not have been nicer. Dr. Dwight Wilbur I've mentioned--he just passed away at ninety-plus. His father was Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, president of the university, who had been with the Hoover administration in Washington, D.C. Dr. Frank Gerbode, probably one of the pioneers in open heart surgery: a very, very nice person whose wife's family had great holdings in Honolulu.

Dr. Leo Eloesser was a little man and he had two little Dachshunds that would go on rounds with him. [laughter]

Crawford: Really!

Shenson: In fact, I think once he even brought them into surgery because one of them needed something done. He would have been more of a contemporary of my brother. Dr. Victor Richards was also a contemporary of Ben's--a brilliant surgeon. You respected all these doctors who were your teachers. Today you wonder how much students respect their teachers.

Crawford: Dr. Bloomfield was something of a legend too?

Shenson: Oh, yes. He was the head of the department of medicine at Stanford--Clay and Webster. He was the counterpart to Dr. George DeForest Barnett at the County Hospital.

Crawford: Was there a rivalry between Stanford and UC at County Hospital?

Shenson: Not really. You know, in those days an intern was dressed in white: white shoes, white pants, white, white, white. Today, you don't know sometimes who the doctor is and who is the patient. But if you saw an intern walking down the corridor at the General Hospital, just by his demeanor and just the way he looked you knew whether he was a Stanford intern or a Cal intern--at least that is what they used to say.

Crawford: Can you remember something more about Dr. Bloomfield?

Shenson: He was a rather stern gentleman, very knowledgeable, worked very hard, and was revered by his students and house staff. Unless you worked with him, I don't know how close you felt

towards him. I remember going to a clinic in the wards and he'd be examining someone and have the patient stand up, and he always made sure the nurse covered the patient's mouth with something so that the patient would not be breathing on him as he was examining the patient.

Crawford: And did you study with Dr. Frank Gerbode?

Shenson: He was on the faculty, yes.

Crawford: Was cardiology a specialty of yours?

Shenson: No, it was internal medicine with cardiology as a subspecialty.

Crawford: We talked about the clinics where you spent time--were there services to pay for the poorest patients?

Shenson: They went through Social Service, and as I said, the County Hospital was for the indigent ones that couldn't pay anything. If someone was able to pay whatever the minimal amount was they could be treated at Stanford. If they didn't have any financial means then they were referred to the San Francisco County Hospital outpatient clinics.

Crawford: I had read something about the benevolent societies, and I know that the German Benevolent Society is still active in terms of raising money to take care of people in that community who are needy.

Shenson: Oh, and I think the French Society is too.

Crawford: I believe the French Benevolent Society became the French Hospital, didn't it? You might want to tell that charming story here about Ben's birth there.

Shenson: When my brother was born, Dr. Reginald Knight Smith was the obstetrician. And on that fateful day--or night or morning--November 1, 1915, when little Benny Shenson was born at French Hospital, my father was the proudest man in this world. My mother fortunately did not have a bad labor and she was so happy to have a little boy.

Dr. Reginald Smith was referred to as Dr. Reginald "All-Night" Smith, because in those days, as I mentioned before, obstetricians were up morning, noon, and night. They couldn't control deliveries like they do today. But Dr. Smith said, "You know, Rose, if you have any more children, I'm not going to come to this--excuse the expression--antiquated hospital." He was so disturbed at that time with the

facilities that five and a half years later when I was born mother chose Mt. Zion Hospital. Dr. Smith--Reginald "All-Night" Smith--was an extremely well-known obstetrician, and if you ask many people today of my age vintage about Dr. Smith, they'll say, "Oh, yes, he delivered me, too."
[laughter]

Crawford: Where was his practice?

Shenson: I don't know, to be truthful.

Medical Research in the 1950s

Crawford: We haven't talked about research. Did the two of you do research in medical school?

Shenson: No, not really. In fact, this opens a whole bag of worms in one sense, because once the medical school moved back to Stanford University, research became important to the point that the pendulum almost swung more to research than to old-fashioned clinical medicine.

I remember doing a little research with one of the doctors, but nothing to the degree that the young students do today. At Stanford the curriculum is four years, but most of them take a fifth year now, so they can spend a year in research. These days many of the new medical students already have spent a year or two doing research; some have their masters degrees, and some have Ph.D.s. The whole background of new medical students is quite different today.

In our days it was almost a twenty-four-hour-a-day job, as I've said. I shouldn't say "job," but it was work. It was very concentrated and there was no time for much else. As a matter of fact, in those days, particularly during my brother's time in medical school and mine too, not many of the medical students were married. They didn't have time to take care of personal things like that. They had to be available. As we say, medicine was a hard taskmaster.

Crawford: Do you remember what your fees were when you started practicing?

Shenson: Oh, they were flexible, but I think it could have been three or

four or maybe five dollars for an office visit, maybe seven and a half dollars for a residence visit--very, very modest, but of course a dollar was worth more then.

Crawford: Today you probably couldn't get a house call at any price, could you? Very rare.

Shenson: Very rare. But I would still make a house call. I have a little black bag in both cars. In those earlier days our schedule was basically to make hospital rounds and see hospital patients. When I first joined Ben in the practice of medicine, we had patients in several hospitals and there were house calls to make as well. In those days we didn't have some of the medications that we have today. We didn't have the emergency treatment rooms like we have today, although San Francisco did have several emergency rooms that people could go to, but they didn't exist in association with hospitals to the degree that they do today, except at the County Hospital.

Crawford: So who staffed those out-of-hospital emergency rooms?

Shenson: The City of San Francisco.

Crawford: So in some ways that wasn't very efficient?

Shenson: It was better than not having any. The County or General Hospital would always see patients and has always been considered to have the best trauma unit in the Bay Area.

Crawford: Were fees great for hospital stays?

Shenson: I suspect some of the professors might have charged a large fee. In the old Stanford Lane there were many Hollywood personalities that were treated there. One of them gave the surgeon and the resident each an automobile! But I remember my mother had a nice room with a solarium in the 1950s and I think her daily bill was seven and a half dollars a day.

Ben Shenson Establishes a Practice: 1948; Jess Shenson Joins Him: 1951

Crawford: You said that your brother treated Herbert Hoover?

Shenson: Yes.

Crawford: Was that a Stanford connection again?

Shenson: Yes, it was through Dr. Dwight Wilbur. The Boss, as they called Herbert Hoover, would always stay at the Mark Hopkins Hotel during the Bohemian Grove sessions.

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Shenson: At the end of the day he wanted my brother to come up and just have a little visit and they always had martinis. [laughs] He had a lovely apartment in the Waldorf Towers in New York City. In fact, in my brother's office is a photograph of the Boss, and behind him in a case are beautiful blue and white Chinese porcelains. Being interested in this sort of thing ourselves, we always admired them. Ben paid visits to Herbert Hoover several times at the Waldorf Towers. Downstairs we have a whole shelf full of memorabilia from Herbert Hoover.

Crawford: You mentioned the family that built the Mark Hopkins.

Shenson: Yes, it was George Smith. He and his wife Eleanor Smith built the Mark Hopkins Hotel, and it was shortly after my brother went into private practice of medicine that my father, who knew George Smith very well, said to George, "You know, George, Ben is now going to be in private practice downtown. He's by himself, and I'm sure that if you have any medical problems at the hotel and you need any help, you should feel free to call him."

So for the next fifty years we were called upon. I could tell you so many, many, many stories about some very pleasant, plain, lovely people and some very highly respected internationally known figures, but I guess we don't go into too many details about that.

Crawford: That would be privileged information.

Shenson: But I'm sure it's no secret Ben took care of Herbert Hoover many times--fortunately no serious illness except on the very first visit there was a little problem, but nothing serious.

The first famous personality I saw was Carmen Miranda, and she couldn't have been nicer. Many of these people felt that if they had a vitamin injection it helped with their performances. So without any fanfare she raised her skirt and said, "Right here," and pointed to her bottom. [laughter] She was onstage all the time.

It was shortly after I joined Ben in the practice of medicine that my brother had gone out on a social engagement, and so when the phone rang at home I answered and then I had to

go down to the Mark Hopkins Hotel to visit a patient who was here on a State Department visit by the name of Emperor Haile Selassie.

Crawford: The Lion of Judah.

Shenson: A charming gentleman. Immediately, he said, "Do you speak French?" I told him no, so we spoke in English. He had a few medical problems; fortunately none of any great significance, but I did go back and see him the next day to make sure he was better and he was. He had his aide come over and hand me a gift, a gold coin minted when he was crowned Emperor [shows the coin].

Crawford: Did people such as heads of state want to be looked over just as they were traveling? Or was it usually a real concern?

Shenson: Usually a real concern. Relative to that coin it was really very special. I thought we would put it on a bracelet and let my mother use it, but my uncle--who was in the jewelry business, when he saw it he said, "Don't you dare. You just put this away. It's too valuable to be dangling on a bracelet." [laughs]

Crawford: It's a beautiful thing.

Shenson: And unusual.

Crawford: Any others you can remember?

Shenson: In those day we did see many, many movie personalities. The list goes on and on. I think I might have mentioned that one night the phone rang at midnight, and the gentleman said that he was with this young lady who wasn't well and that she needed some medical attention. I asked, naturally, what was the medical problem. It didn't seem that serious, but he asked me, however, to kindly come over. So I got up, and when I knocked on the door Rex Harrison opened it.

Crawford: And Kay Kendall?

Shenson: Yes. He was doing My Fair Lady in New York and she was doing a film in Hollywood. She was a beautiful young lady, and fortunately not too ill at that time.

But we would sometimes be up more than once in the night. You know, today the young doctor doesn't even like to make a house call. They say if you're sick enough to need a house call you should be in the hospital. And of course with the

government regulations--HMOs and all that--it's hard to put a patient in the hospital unless it is an acute condition.

Crawford: What kind of reception would I get if I were staying at the Mark Hopkins and called for a doctor? Would that still be Dr. Shenson?

Shenson: Not anymore. Not as of April 1995.

Crawford: You said several times that you worked very, very hard and that you were old fashioned in your approach. Perhaps you would talk about that?

Shenson: When I look at some of our records and know that between my brother and myself we might make six or eight house calls in a morning--we wouldn't even be in the office in the morning; we were out going to the hospital and had, sometimes, to be in more than one hospital.

I'm remembering something more about Rex Harrison. When I saw him it was almost the beginning of his run in My Fair Lady with Julie Andrews and of course you couldn't get a ticket for love or money. My brother was going back to New York for a medical meeting and I wrote Rex Harrison a note asking for two tickets to My Fair Lady and enclosed a check. When Ben picked up his tickets, he got Rex Harrison's two house seats. The Duke and Duchess of Windsor were at that performance, and they were off on the side! [laughter]

Crawford: He had better seats than the Duke and Duchess?

Shenson: Yes. But I could tell you about so many wonderful people--and a bunch of characters too, if you will turn this off. [tape interruption]

Crawford: Perhaps you will decide to include some of those, at least in general form.

Shenson: Well, people are nice the world over for the most part. Particularly when they're not well. That's why we enjoyed taking care of people visiting San Francisco. Other hotels came to us, too, in time, but we didn't want to become known as hotel doctors, because in those days hotel doctors usually, particularly in other cities, were older doctors who were semiretired and really were not up on things. It was just something to keep busy. But during our medical careers since we were together, we did have time off individually--not at the same time--and traveled a great deal and realized that it's bad enough to be sick at home, but when you're away from home it's

much worse. So we were always very happy to be of help to people.

Crawford: So your brother started in 1948 and you joined him in 1951.

Shenson: Yes, and as I said, when he went into practice it was hard to find an office because there was no space available. All the other doctors were coming back from the war and office space was at a premium. Ben didn't want to go in with anyone but he was able to sublet some space at 490 Post, which is a very good medical office building. He had about four hours on certain days that he could use that office, and in the meantime, of course, he was looking for space.

He did look around and went to 450 Sutter. Mr. Proctor Flannigan was the manager then, and Ben explained that he was looking for space. Mr. Flannigan said, "Well, there is an office that we're just fixing up, but I'm afraid it's too large for you." He showed Ben the office, and Ben said, "It would fit my needs very well. I would like to give you a deposit." Mr. Flannigan said, "Well, it's expensive and you're by yourself," but Ben said, "My brother is going to join me in a year." Mr. Flannigan said, "Well, let me think about this."

Fortunately my brother knew Dr. Henry Garland, who was a very well-known radiologist here in San Francisco. He had worked out of the County Hospital. Harry (his name was Henry, but they called him Harry) Garland had the x-ray department in 450 Sutter, and Ben went up to Harry and said, "I'd like to get that space down in room 400. You'd better talk to Proctor Flannigan." Long story short, he got it.

So that's where I started with Ben in 1951. It was a little bit close quarters for us, so about three years later we moved up to our present suite of offices. Where I am now was just one very large general office, but they built it to our specifications and it is really, literally, home away from home because we spent more time there sometimes than at home. So it has worked out extremely well.

Of course, since my brother passed away it's more space than I need, and I told the management they could use some if they wanted to. You know, you sort of get used to a certain setup, and it's kind of hard to change. Actually, I retired from the active practice, but with all my extracurricular activities I keep busy. As you know, I still see a few patients--the old-timers.

Crawford: So then when you set up your office you got referrals from other people?

Shenson: Yes, and other doctors. Ben was well established, however, and the practice continued to grow. In those first twenty years or more, the number of house calls were great, because of course medications were different. There's a book called PDR [Physicians' Desk Reference]--I have a current one here--that's about three and a half inches thick, listing all medications and prescribing instructions. When I went into the practice of medicine in '51, this same book was half-an-inch thick. Medicine has made tremendous strides relative to available medications. For example, in the old days, you would give a person with congestive heart failure an intermuscular injection of mercurhydren to get rid of the fluid. Now there's all kinds of oral medications that do the same thing and are sometimes better. To give a very ill patient an injection of medicine it means a house call.

And then, in those earlier days we didn't just go to Stanford Hospital, but had patients at other hospitals. Today, of course, most doctors stay just at one hospital and aren't going to spend a lot of time traveling. After our experience with Dr. Boskowitz we always kept to a strict appointment schedule, and to this day patients will say, "You know, when you say 2:15, you mean 2:15," and because we mean 2:15, they're there at 2:15.

Practicing at St. Francis Hospital

Crawford: That is unusual. Well, talk about your hospital association, would you? That was very much a part of your practices.

Shenson: Being at Stanford--Clay and Webster--that was home base, but then when the medical school moved down to Stanford campus things changed tremendously.

Ben had been going to St. Francis Memorial Hospital before I joined him and was very pleased with the service there. It was not a teaching hospital, but it had a very good nursing service, a good dietetic service, the patient got good care, and you were in total charge of your patient. So when the medical school finally moved in the early 1950s we decided we would take the majority of our patients to St. Francis and have been doing so ever since. Originally, St. Francis was on the corner of Bush and Hyde. There is a building there now that is part of the hospital, but the "new" hospital was built on the corner of Hyde and Pine, at the other end of the block.

It's still a marvelous facility, and interestingly enough, when it was built they had 90 percent private rooms. It may not be a large luxurious room, but you had all you wanted; you had privacy, and you were near the nurses station.

There is, on nearly each floor, however, what we call the VIP room, which is fancier, but there again--the nursing service, the dietetic service--they're really excellent and we continued to go there until we retired from the active practice.

Now I do not hospitalize any of my patients. The few I do see, if they require hospitalization, I refer them to another office and I see them on a social basis. I'm in the hospital two or three times a week just looking in on old patients and going to meetings. I'm on the St. Francis Hospital Foundation board. I think you know that the hospital has a very large collection of Theodore Wores paintings on permanent view.

Crawford: Yes. I saw the "Hunting Grounds of the Past" there--the one you told me was painted in Calgary, Canada--looking down on an industrialized landscape. How many do they have?

Shenson: At least forty or more; closer to fifty now, I think. It's the only hospital that I know of in the United States that has a permanent collection of original oil paintings.

Crawford: What does being a board member mean?

Shenson: This is not board of the hospital. It's the St. Francis Foundation. We have our annual fundraiser called the Festival of the Arts, and this year it was at Butterfield & Butterfield: a black tie sit-down dinner catered by Dan McCall and with some outstanding entertainment. One of the young artists from the Merola program, John Relyea, sang two numbers; and a young mezzo from the Conservatory of Music, a Russian girl, sang; and then for a little variety they had a tango team. [laughs] You know tango has become very popular. Then, to finish things off, four saxophone players. So it was very varied and everyone had a thoroughly good time. So the Foundation is a hard-working board made up of some doctors, but mostly lay personnel, to raise money and allocate funds for medical things needed by the hospital.

The Changing Practice of Medicine: A Day in the Life of the Shensons

Crawford: How has the practice changed over the many years since you and your brother began?

Shenson: We should really say, "how the delivery of health care has changed." Patients are patients, illnesses are the same, and from my personal standpoint it hasn't changed because I haven't changed. I think, unfortunately, because of our malpractice problems and the fact that the average citizen has been so inundated with all the medical knowledge that they think they've learned reading the newspaper that there has been a great problem relative to overutilization of laboratories and similar services.

Today, if you go into St. Francis Hospital's emergency treatment room and say you don't have a doctor and you've been coughing and you have a temperature of a hundred degrees, they'll check you over, but now they have to be careful: they'll want to take a full blood count, you'll get a chest x-ray, and if you complain of a little chest pain you'll get an electrocardiogram. Before you know it the bill goes into a hundred dollars. Yet, if you don't do that and, god forbid, something is there that you didn't diagnose at the moment, you're just liable for anything.

And then, of course, at one point the insurance company just paid all the bills, but now of course they have been clamping down. The government has clamped down--.

Crawford: It does seem so impersonal.

Shenson: It is. And the rules and regulations and the paperwork just make it very difficult. It would be almost impossible today for anyone here in San Francisco, particularly, to go into the private practice of medicine, and open their own office. I mean, you just can't do it. You have got to go into an established office and become one of several.

Crawford: What would a day in the life of the Doctors Shenson been like in the 1950s?

Shenson: The 1950s? Well, we spent our mornings making house calls. We went from home, and we might go in one car to the hospitals first to see the patients.

Crawford: You would go together?

Shenson: Yes. Usually we did.

Crawford: Early in the morning?

Shenson: Oh, very early, yes. I was happy to get up at five or five-fifteen every morning. An early start, because if you don't start early you're fighting the clock. If you get up at nine o'clock or you leave the house at nine o'clock, before you know it it's eleven o'clock and you rush. But if you get an early start and pace your activity accordingly it works out much, much better. Actually, in those early days we would start together at a hospital, then usually, one way or another, would individually make house calls. Sometimes my brother would have more house calls on a Tuesday than I would; I would have more on a Wednesday or a Thursday.

We would adjust it accordingly, because a lot of the house calls were routine. As I say, medications were such that you couldn't get some of these patients to the office for intermuscular injections and they certainly wouldn't go to the treatment room; they didn't have treatment rooms. In those days, under Dr. J. C. Geiger, who is a well-known name, there were emergency treatment rooms that were associated with the city of San Francisco. Of course, they took the place of emergency treatment rooms that are part of the hospitals now.

Crawford: What were they like?

Shenson: They had an M.D. and orderlies. People were given good, adequate emergency care and then referred back to their doctor if they had a doctor; or if they didn't there would be someone available that they could be seen by later.

Crawford: So you did your rounds in the morning?

Shenson: Rounds in the morning. We usually would always come home for a little, very light lunch.

Crawford: And your mother was here?

Shenson: Yes, she was checking up on us. Then we would start at one o'clock or quarter to one at the office, and for routine visits we would allocate fifteen minutes, for a new patient forty-five minutes to an hour, and we would work straight through till about five-thirty, six o'clock.

Crawford: And then back here. Did you walk those distances?

Shenson: No. It wouldn't be bad walking down, but walking up at the end of a long day--it's all uphill. Then one never knew, if the phone rang and there was an emergency house call to make you had to have a car there. That happened more than once, I can assure you. But the fact that the two of us were together--we could always work out any emergency; we could always work out anything. The reason we got along so well and could do as much as we did medically and non-medically was the fact we could spell each other off. One of us was always available.

Crawford: Yes, and I'm sure that that made your patients feel very secure.

Shenson: They may not have gotten the Dr. Shenson they wanted. They got number two. They were happy, however, to get him. [laughter]

Crawford: Did you divide your patients in any way?

Shenson: No. It was an unwritten rule that if patients came in to see me for the first time they were my patient. But if I wasn't available, they would be very happy to see my brother and vice versa.

Crawford: Could people come without an appointment?

Shenson: Oh, we discouraged it, because we were really on a tight schedule. No, they always phoned, and neither of us ever said, "I'm sorry. I can't see you for another three weeks." Today, this does happen but we made every effort to see them just as soon as possible and, if medically necessary, the same day.

Crawford: How did you generally spend your evenings?

Shenson: Well, there was always some social event. We didn't go to the theater quite as much, but, of course, those were the days of some wonderful shows. We always went to the Civic Light Opera when Ed Lester produced it. We would also go to the symphony, opera, theater and recitals. We belonged to several musical clubs that would meet in the evenings.

Crawford: Did you go to temple?

Shenson: We moved to Palm Avenue after living on Ashbury Street for a number of years. Palm Avenue is just a few blocks from the Temple Emanu-El, so we went there. I think we figured out that we've been members of the congregation over fifty years.

Crawford: Did that mean active participation at that point?

Shenson: Not that active. Certainly we were members and went at high holiday season. When my father passed away in 1950 I think we became a little bit more involved, but we never have taken on any specific responsibility, just supported it. We did establish the Dr. Ben and A. Jess Shenson Music Endowment Fund. They have a magnificent Skinner organ that needed repairs, and it still needs some more, but we do support that and a lot of other things at the Temple.

My brother passed away in August 1995 and a year ago January we had a beautiful musical tribute to him there. It was something that I will never forget. Some people from New York flew out to entertain and a lot of the people who performed would be familiar to you.

Crawford: What was Rose Shenson doing during the early years?

Shenson: Well, she, of course, loved to go down to Stanford to the Mother's Club. I mentioned that. That was a big deal when both my brother and I were going there--a group of ladies whose sons or daughters were also going to Stanford would go down once a month to the Mothers Club. My mother was also very active in the Pacific Music Club and the Allied Arts Club here in San Francisco.

Crawford: What was the Allied Arts Club?

Shenson: It was a musical group. It was quite flourishing for a long time, but then suddenly I guess people weren't able to maintain it. There was also the San Francisco Music Club, but she was never involved in that particular one. One year she was the chairman of auditions for the Federation of Music Clubs. She kept very, very busy!

Crawford: But she was always here for lunch, was she?

Shenson: Oh, yes. That's right.

Crawford: As I told you, Hans Brandt was remembering Sunday dinners right here at this window, I think, the way that he described it. He said she made a divine pot roast. [laughter]

Shenson: Yes. It was wonderful. My father, of course, just loved to eat. He sometimes ate too much, and he got very heavy, but he enjoyed it, so I guess that is what counts.

Medical Meetings and Associations

Crawford: Did you and Dr. Ben attend medical meetings?

Shenson: Yes. Two years after I joined Ben I decided that I wanted to go to the American Medical Association annual meeting. It was being held in Chicago; 1953. Socially, it's a lot of fun and you do learn some things, but it is even more of a social thing now. You do attend the meetings and learn things, but you can read most of these articles in the journals if you take the time.

But for me to go to Chicago was really quite exciting. I took my mother with me and as I told you when we were landing in Chicago it was very, very, very turbulent and she got very, very, very sick. When she got off the airplane and got to the hotel and was able to relax, she said, "I'm never going to go on another airplane." [laughter]

Crawford: What did she do while you were attending the meetings?

Shenson: Well, we had a hotel that was really right in the heart of Chicago so she would just walk around. My brother had had a patient from Chicago who had a severe coronary but fortunately had a complete recovery and continued to be very appreciative to my brother and would correspond with him periodically. He was a man of great means, had a gorgeous apartment on Lakeshore Drive and had us to his apartment for dinner.

He came back to San Francisco occasionally and would always ask both of us out for a little dinner. When Ben got the office in 450 Sutter he was on the fourth floor, and the gentleman and his wife came to visit and he presented Ben with a large, heavy package. When my brother opened it, it was the current issue of all the major magazines. He said, "I want you to be sure that you always have current magazines in your waiting room." And we've maintained that to this day.
[laughter]

Crawford: Good for you. Well, I'm looking here at this impressive list of medical societies that both of you belonged to--some different, some the same. So let's go through those briefly, and you can tell me how much time they took and what was the work involved for the association and nature of the association.

Shenson: Medically our hospital affiliation was with St. Francis Hospital, and there were many meetings to attend. Ben was also

on the hospital board. My brother was also an associate clinical professor at Stanford University School of Medicine and then became emeritus. I was a clinical instructor at Stanford and then became emeritus.

Crawford: Did Ben ever think of becoming a full-time faculty member?

Shenson: He enjoyed teaching, but not full-time. You may know that if the word clinical is in the title that means it's a nonpaying position.

Crawford: I see. I had that association. That was a teaching position that was volunteer.

Shenson: Yes. In the medical societies that we joined we paid our own dues and you went to certain meetings. The California Medical Association and the San Francisco County Medical Society would send us monthly magazines of important medical information.

Crawford: Oh, this is how you kept up to date; you could read journals.

Shenson: That's right. And they would have officers and meetings, but just like my brother and I never joined any clubs, we were just too busy with other things. We belonged to these societies because they were important medically, but we didn't get involved with the politics.

Then the California Academy of Medicine is an honorary association and it is still in existence today. It meets three or four times a year, usually a black tie dinner, and they always have a very outstanding speaker. It's just a very pleasant social evening but also with a good speaker on some subject in medicine. Both of us have been members in that.

The American College of Physicians is very important. You have to take examinations to pass, and my brother became a fellow of the American College of Physicians. He was very young, one of the youngest people that became a fellow and he took out a life membership and paid his dues. Subsequently when he checked on dues many years later, the yearly dues were in excess of the lifetime dues. So he made a good investment.

Then as far as the Board of Governors at Stanford Medical School Alumni Association. He went to meetings relative to the medical alumni.

Crawford: So that was your Stanford connection?

Shenson: Yes, definitely.

Crawford: Good. And yours are just about the same except you have the American Medical Association.

Shenson: Yes. And as far as these extracurricular things, I think we've covered most of them or they're self-explanatory, too.

Longstanding Patients

Crawford: I had wanted to ask you a question before we move on to some of the other associations--what patients you see from a long time ago.

Shenson: Well, some patients I see once a month routinely, and then when they have medical problems they phone and I'm always available. Both of my telephones at home and in the office answer twenty-four hours a day. If I'm not there and they let it ring long enough there's the voice mail. The secretary is in the office Monday through Friday from nine usually until about four o'clock now but then also goes off for lunch. But I'm available to these patients. They know I am.

Bernice is a patient that was my brother's when he was a resident at the San Francisco County Hospital. Let me see the number of years. It must have been in the early forties because Ben got his M.D. in 1940 after his internship. Yes. She is still a patient of the office, as I mentioned before.

Crawford: Isn't that lovely? Lovely for her.

Shenson: Yes, I think so. I see her once a month to check the blood pressure, heart and lungs, because she has a little medical problem, but she's in her nineties. Then I see her sister, her husband, and a sister-in-law.

Tony is the gentleman I spoke with who was the unemployed carpenter and who is now the unofficial mayor of a small town, at least that's what we have always called him.

Crawford: So you are his doctor?

Shenson: Oh yes, and his wife also. His son-in-law was a patient, but then when I retired from the active practice it was more practical for him to stay and have medical attention closer to his home because he didn't live in San Francisco.

I was saying the other day that maybe half of the people that I see on Wednesday might have been patients of my brother's that I just have continued to take care of. They're the old-timers. Fortunately there are none that are too seriously ill, basically just routine visits.

Then, of course, I still maintain the principle that both my brother and I continued to do from the beginning of our practice. Once a year each patient would get a complete physical examination. You can appreciate that if you see a patient every month, every two months, or every three months and just listen to their heart because they have a heart problem or check their stomach you might miss something else that is going on. So once a year every patient would get a full physical, routine laboratory studies consisting of a complete blood count, an SMA panel, electrocardiogram, urinalysis, and anything else that was indicated. So I do that on every patient.

Crawford: And you do that in your office?

Shenson: Yes. The laboratory work is sent out, but we do our own electrocardiograms and I do the full physical.

Crawford: So how many patients are on your dossier now?

Shenson: Oh, I should count that up. But on Wednesdays, which is my main day, I will average twelve to fifteen patients.

Crawford: That's a pretty good day!

Shenson: Yes, it is a busy one. [laughter]

Office Staff

Crawford: Last but not least, Mary Gover and your office staff.

Shenson: Yes, before Mary came to our office, we had another woman from 1947 to 1975. We always had a number two girl but when the last one left we asked Mary to interview others. She asked if she could run the office by herself--she loved to work--and we said fine, and that is the way it was after that even up to today. She is in the office from nine to four, five days a week, with an hour for lunch.

Crawford: I know she is invaluable.

A Special House on Washington Street

[Interview 4: June 13, 1997]##

Crawford: We haven't talked much about the history of this house and Mrs. Boggs.

Shenson: Yes, Mrs. Mae Helene Bacon Boggs. I have from the California Heritage Council a certificate of recognition for the preservation and maintenance of the Angus Boggs residence signed in 1977.

Crawford: Does this mean it is an historic house, and you can't change it?

Shenson: No, I think that if the National Trust for Historic Preservation cites a house, then you cannot, but that is not true with the California Heritage Council.

Crawford: You can't change the facade or much of anything if it is the property of the National Trust.

Shenson: I don't know if you remember my mentioning the name Dr. Joseph Baird in the past. He passed away several years ago, but he taught at the University of California, Davis, and he was really a scholar. I don't know what other word to use. He was a very dedicated person, he loved the arts, a true art historian, as I might have mentioned. When he wrote something he wanted it to be factual. He made sure the i's were dotted, the t's were crossed, and he always said, "You know, too many people just don't really check their references. Something comes into print and it's not accurate and then the mistake is perpetuated." So he was devoted to making sure everything was accurately researched.

He taught art history, and he assigned this building to a young lady in his class in 1978, and she wrote a significant history of the house, which I found incredibly interesting.

Crawford: What a good idea.

Shenson: The historical and architectural significance of the house is covered, because this is history, and this paper, I think, is terribly important for the archives.

Crawford: It probably is as much of a history as there is written about the house.

Shenson: Yes. Well, we first met Mrs. Boggs in 1954; Ben found her sitting outside the house one day. She eventually became a patient of ours. Fortunately she was never too ill. We brought her back to the house for her one-hundredth birthday. She always talked about the book that she had written. Her uncle had been a stagecoach dispatcher.

Crawford: My Playhouse Was a Stagecoach?

Shenson: Yes, My Playhouse Was a Concord Coach. It is incredible. It's a chronicle of early California. I have it here. [Published by Howell-North Press, Oakland, California, 1942]

Crawford: How did you come by this book?

Shenson: Mrs. Boggs always talked about it, and after she passed away, it seems to me there was an auction. My brother and I went to it and there was a copy of this book, and when we saw it we wanted to have it in our collection, after all this was our home.

Warren Howell was at that auction and he bought the book--he bid higher than we thought it was going to be and we thought, "If Warren Howell paid that for it, it was worth it."

Several weeks later I took my mother up to Shasta, California, to visit the museum there, which is now run by the State of California. Mrs. Boggs actually established that museum when she lived here, because she just had the small apartment in the Women's Athletic Club (now the Metropolitan Club), and she sent a lot of her memorabilia--photographs, paintings, her wedding dress, her opera gowns--up to this museum.

We went through it and we inquired about the book, which they really didn't know much about, but someone said, "Why don't you put an ad in the newspaper about it because perhaps some of the old-timers in Shasta might have a copy."

So we did just that, and one person answered the ad, but he asked some terribly high price for the book. So we didn't buy it then, and several years later we found a copy at Warren Howell's bookshop. The interesting thing that puts all of this in focus is the fact that one of the paintings reproduced in Mrs. Boggs' book was called "First Customs House in California" built in Monterey, California. The painting was by--Theodore Wores! Mrs. Boggs spoke to us many times about Theodore Wores whom she remembered very well and this particular painting is

in the Boggs' collection of California painters in the museum in Shasta, California.

Crawford: Isn't that something? Everything comes around full-circle. What do you remember of her?

Shenson: She used to come to our house whenever we invited her, sit on the third floor, and tell us stories and bring photographs of the original house and neighborhood. One day at noontime the phone rang and there was a lady from the Metropolitan Club who said that Granny Boggs had just had a rather severe nosebleed and the ladies were concerned. She told Mrs. Boggs, "Now don't worry, everything is going to be all right."

Mrs. Boggs said, "There are two doctors living in my home. Maybe you can call them." So they phoned and my brother did see her. Fortunately the nosebleed had stopped and she was fine. We always have had the feeling there was a little bit of Christian Science in her makeup. [laughter]

But that really cemented our personal relationships, because every so often either Ben or I would go down to see how Granny Boggs was doing. She had a very nice apartment that was built to her specifications when the Women's Athletic Club was being built and she took out a life membership.

She was a true historian. She must have had a half a dozen files in her apartment--all the history of California. She was a very small lady, very prim and proper and always lovely and immaculately dressed. She would go down for her lunch or dinner in the Club and she had a certain chair in the dining room with a little footstool.

Crawford: Kind of an elegant way to live, wasn't it? I don't know if people still live at private clubs.

Shenson: I don't know, because you get to a certain age and they don't want the responsibility of having you at a club.

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Shenson: One day when my brother visited Granny Boggs at the Club, he told her that the three Shensons would like to give her a party at the Crest on her next birthday. She had named our home "The Crest," and as a matter of fact we have some of the original stationary from that time that says "The Crest." When Ben mentioned this possible party to her, she did not say anything at the time but the next time he saw her she said, "Were you serious about a party?" and, of course, he said "Yes!"

Well, this gave Granny Boggs new life. She started making up her invitation list, and the day came in 1963 when she returned to 1266 Washington Street (the Crest) to celebrate her 100th birthday! We took her up to the second floor where she sat in one of the bay windows and there received the many, many friends and relatives from the "good old days" who came and brought her flowers from her garden in Shasta. The children up in Shasta wrote her letters, "How does it feel to be 100 years old," etcetera, etcetera. She received innumerable letters and even a telegram from the President of the United States and was interviewed on television.

Crawford: Who else has owned the house?

Shenston: In one of the 1880s census of San Francisco this address was 1228 Washington Street. A Mr. George Tay built a cottage here in 1854, and he and his wife Mary and their daughter Jenny resided here for some twenty-six years. It was fifty-two years later that Angus Gordon Boggs and his wife, Mae Helene Bacon Boggs, moved into the house, now enlarged and with fifteen or sixteen rooms, some panelled with redwood twelve to fourteen inches wide!

Let me just quote here from something I have about her: "Mrs. Boggs was noted for her work in civic issues, such as the fight in California for women's suffrage, the saving of Aquatic Park for public use, and suggesting the name for the Shasta Dam. She is also remembered and commended for her work in recording and commemorating the past. Her book, My Playhouse Was a Concord Coach, is a historical account of life in Shasta during the early days of California history, beginning in 1822. Mrs. Boggs was born February 16, 1863, in Pike County, Missouri. When eight years old, she and her mother, widow to Charles Bacon, moved to Shasta to live with Mrs. Boggs' uncle, Williamson Smith, a stagecoach driver who in 1854 carried the first mail on horseback from Jacksonville to Canyonville, Oregon."

"This [photo] is a portion of a large bronze plaque that commemorates the unique, important element in the past of the old towns: stagecoach. It was erected by Mrs. Boggs in 1931 in loving memory of her uncle and to those pioneers who held the ribbons but have turned the bend of the road. In addition, Mrs. Boggs donated her former Redding home to the American Legion and financed Memorial Hall there. Largely as a result of her work, some buildings of the Gold Rush era had been preserved in Shasta on the main street and the old courthouse restored and converted into a museum to which she donated many of her personal belongings. When she moved in 1924 from 1266

Washington Street to the Women's Athletic Club, she donated all the furnishings, antiques, and memorabilia to the Shasta Museum."

"Mr. Boggs, according to the Crocker Langley city directory of San Francisco, had a number of different occupations. In 1908 he was proprietor of the Standard Hotel. In 1911 he was associated with mining, and in the same year the change in house number was registered in the directory; prior to 1911 the house number was still 1228 Washington. In 1912 Angus Gordon Boggs was a mining broker; in 1913, a real estate broker in the Pacific Building; 1915, a broker; and in 1916, in mining."

Crawford: Those pioneers did everything.

Shenson: Oh, absolutely. "It was in 1924 that Drew Chitester moved to 1266 Washington Street. He was an important steamship executive of the General Steamship Company, Ltd., San Francisco, which conducted business worldwide and which began in 1919. His obituary appeared in the New York Times, January 18, 1948. His widow Nell was described as being a patron of the arts. Much remodeling was done by the Chitesters on the original Boggs home."

In 1939 and 1940, the Crocker Langley city directory indicates that a Miss Clara Huntington resided here, and in 1944, Herbert Richards, the western representative for the Arthur Murray Dance Studio, who was the next resident and last owner before the current owners--ourselves. He cut quite a figure in the city at the time. Then shortly after we took over the house, we met the then ninety-one-year-old Mrs. Boggs; that was in 1954.

Crawford: This is a good supporting document; she has done a fine job.

Shenson: What we did for her birthday party is engage an ambulance to pick her up and take her right upstairs. But it wasn't a regular ambulance. We called it the "party ambulance".
[laughter]

We just let a few people in at a time, we didn't want to overwhelm her--and some reporter asked her what was one of the most impressive times she remembered living here. When she was living here, she said, you could see over to Parnassus Avenue, and the grandfather of the redwood tree that you see here could be seen anywhere in the Bay Area. The most spectacular night she could remember was the night they turned on the lights at the Pan Pacific Exhibition. She remembered that! Later she

asked for the "party ambulance" again, so we got one and took her to Fisherman's Wharf. [laughter]

Perhaps I will say just one more thing about Washington Street. We always wanted to find a piece of property with a nice view wherever we lived and worked. You'd think we lived a lot of places, but I only lived in two homes prior to this one. My father always liked the fresh air. No matter where we bought a piece of property, he would always build on an outdoor porch. You would be in the living room, the dining room, the kitchen, the bedrooms, but then off the bedrooms there was an outdoor porch.

We looked at many places that had nice views, and more beautiful homes and in retrospect no matter which home we bought, it would have been a great investment because prices were not that expensive in those days.

Then a woman whom we knew in real estate, on a Thanksgiving weekend, told us about this particular piece of property. She wouldn't meet us here, but met us around the corner and then we walked over here. The driveway was not paved, the garden was a jungle, the front of the house was covered totally with bougainvillea. The house had not been occupied in six months. It was in deplorable condition and it had that musty smell. But we walked through and went upstairs and looked out on the top floor, where you've seen the view, and we were impressed.

We went home and told our mother about it, and as we were going, Ben and I thought, Well, maybe the house is just too run down. Maybe we can just demolish the house, build three units, and take the top floor, like a penthouse, and have that as our residence. But the major problem was the driveway. We had structural engineers come and look at it, and in order to do anything in those days of 1953 to widen the driveway it would have been, I think, ten thousand dollars, which in those days was a lot of money. It would have meant moving the retaining wall back, taking out trees, and would destroy the whole ambiance of the grounds. My mother in her wisdom said, "If we purchase it why don't we just clean it up, live here for a while, and just see if this is where we want to live." And of course today we would not touch one shingle of it. [laughter]

When we moved here there was a very, very large empty lot facing Jackson Street. There was a precipitous drop from this area down to the sidewalk of Jackson Street. Originally there was an open lot on Jones Street and we were told that this would have been the entrance for a court of homes that were going to be built in the center part of the block. Shortly

after we moved to our present home, this empty lot on Jones Street was sold and therefore blocked any further development relative to a court of homes. In order to protect our view, we were anxious to purchase this center part of the block, which we did. The question of developing the lots on Jackson Street came up but, once again, our mother, in her wisdom said, "You boys are doctors and I do not think you should go into the real estate business," so we left it alone.

Crawford: So your view can never be taken.

Shenson: That's right. We have cultivated the most expensive fruit in San Francisco! You know, you water, you fertilize, you prune, [pause] and then you water, you fertilize, and you prune. [laughter] Unfortunately the fruit crop is not as big as it used to be.

Crawford: Have you done any gardening?

Shenson: Oh, yes--but I don't have the time now. When my brother passed away people thought I wouldn't stay in such a big house, but I said, "It's for the duration." And it's not that big, honestly. I rarely go through the front door. I just come up through the back door when I return home. On the first floor there is my bedroom, kitchen, breakfast room, study and a large dining room. One might say this is almost a home on one floor. There is the second floor which is used for entertaining and, of course, the top deck which has almost a 360 degree view. When Yehudi Menuhin was here I had a sit-down dinner for nineteen in the dining room which was a little bit crowded but worked very well and then not too long ago I had cocktails for twenty-four people.

Crawford: You need the house!

Shenson: Oh, yes. Absolutely. I'm reminded of another thing relative to that time, I almost forgot. Do you remember that on December 21, 1976 the St. Francis Yacht Club here in San Francisco burned?

Crawford: Yes.

Shenson: My mother, Ben and I were the guests of Dr. and Mrs. Victor Richards at their Christmas party that night, a very popular event. We were sort of lingering over our dinner and then we went downstairs because they were going to have a Christmas concert.

Shortly after we sat down, I heard sort of a crackling sound as if there was a short or something. I turned around, and the Christmas tree that was right by the window facing the bay was smoking. I didn't think too much about it since I figured, someone would come along right away and take care of it. Within minutes--literally minutes--the tree was on fire. All of the Christmas decorations were plastic, and also caught on fire. The garlands of plastic ivy also started to burn and I remember one burning garland dropped on my brother's back. Dr. Richards brushed the garland off but he sustained some burns to his hands in doing so.

Crawford: Oh, you must have been terrified.

Shenson: Well, it happened so fast, people were really just stunned and didn't know what to do. We all went to get out of the building, and there was an exit, but the door was locked. One great big fellow said, "Stand back," and he just gave it the heave-ho and broke the door down and we all went outside. When we turned around the place was ablaze.

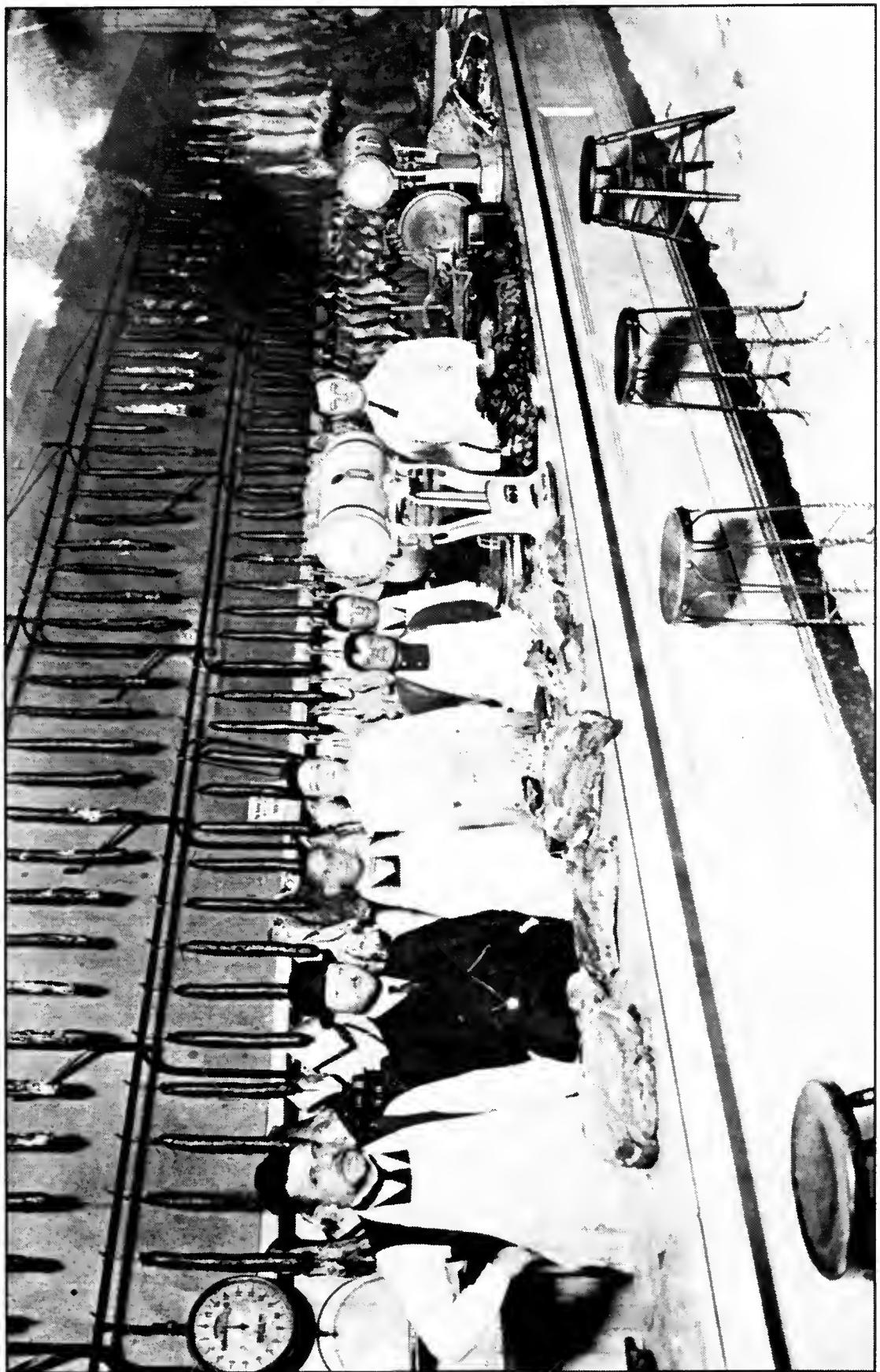
Crawford: Did anyone die?

Shenson: Yes, several people were killed. Someone from the newspaper called us the next day for a news story: "Dr. Shenson said he heard something that sounded like a blown fuse. He and his physician brother, Dr. Ben Shenson, were sitting with their mother, Rose Shenson, near the tree. 'The lights went out,' Jess Shenson said, 'and when I turned I saw a puff of smoke and the tree burst into flames.'" He said the flames spread quickly to the garlands on the ceiling. At least a score of people suffered burns, singed hair, and smoke inhalation. All but three were safely evacuated by waiters and other staff members who came in. "The people were strangely orderly," said Shenson, "there was no panic."

Crawford: How did your mother get out?

Shenson: We just took her by the arm and led her out once the exit door was opened. Then we went up to where the Richards were living. They lived on Broadway, and had this spectacular view. So as we were drinking cognac we could look out and see the fire. Here from this picture you can see how everything was destroyed.

Crawford: What an awful thing.

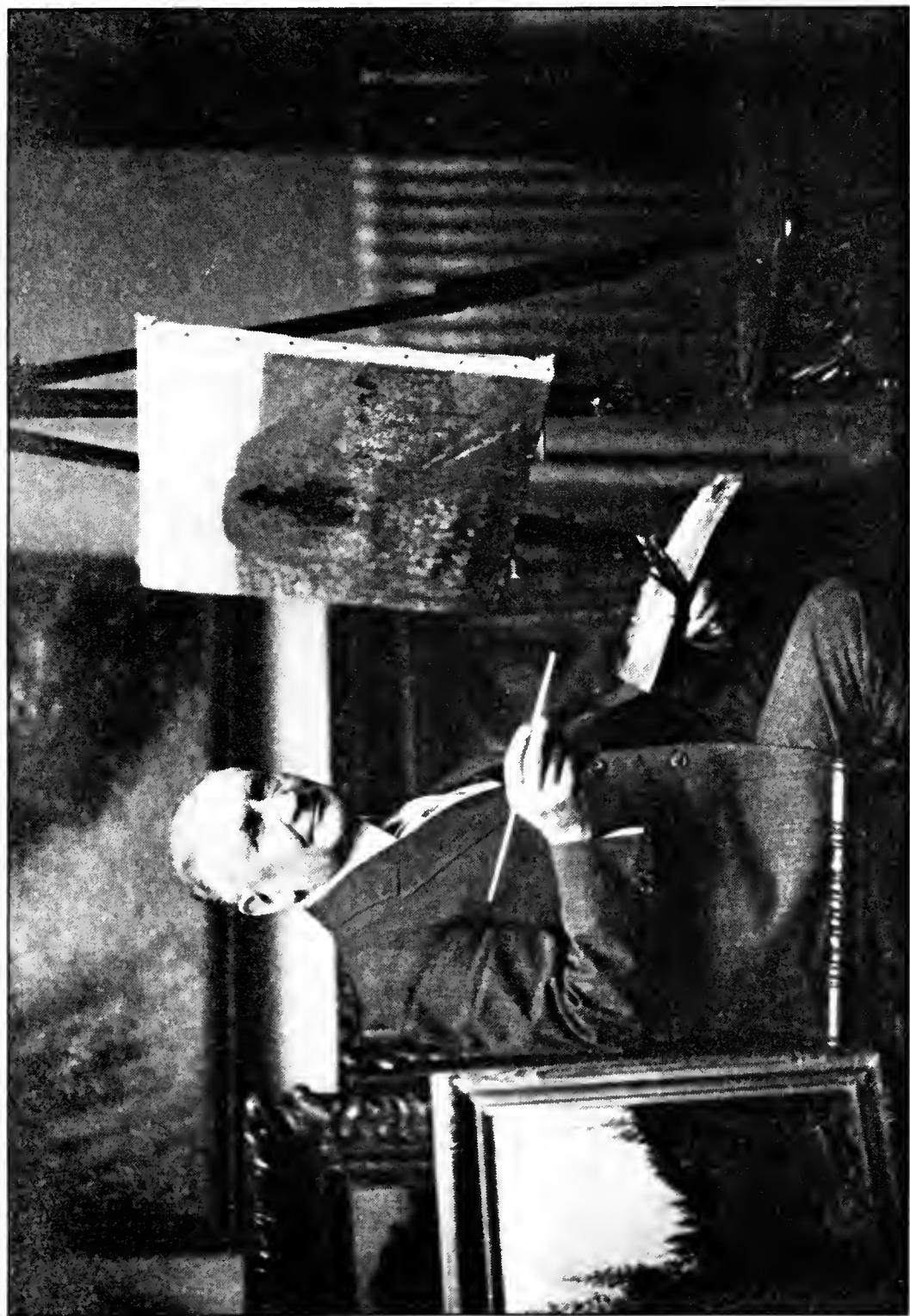


Shenson's Meat Market, circa 1910. Aaron Shenson, at left; Jesse (Shy) Shenson, third from left; Louis Shenson, fourth from left; Joseph Shenson, right.

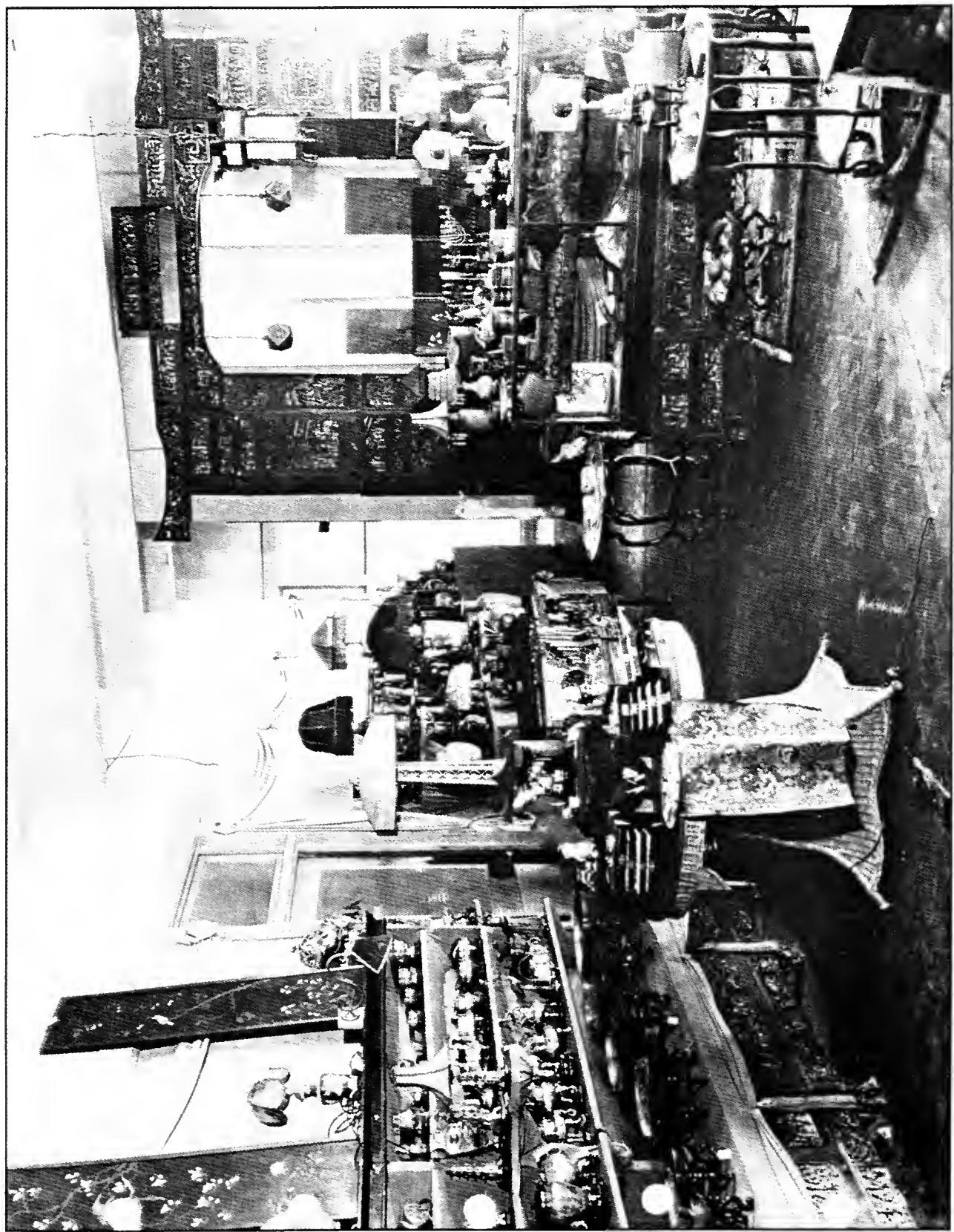


Rose and Louis Shenson on their wedding day, 1914.

Photograph by Gabriel Moulin



Theodore Wores at work in the 1920s.

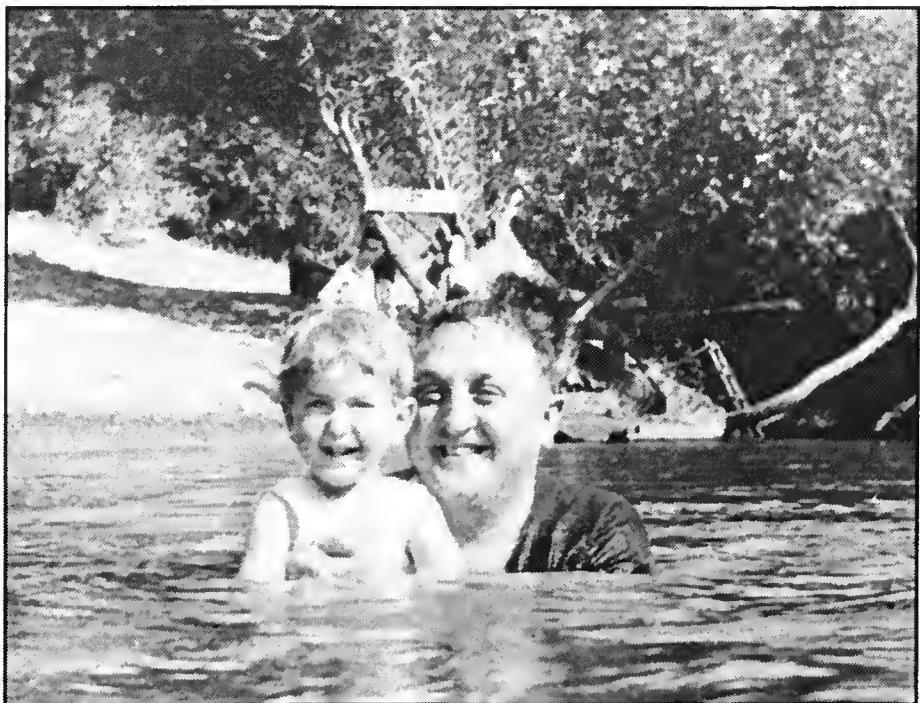


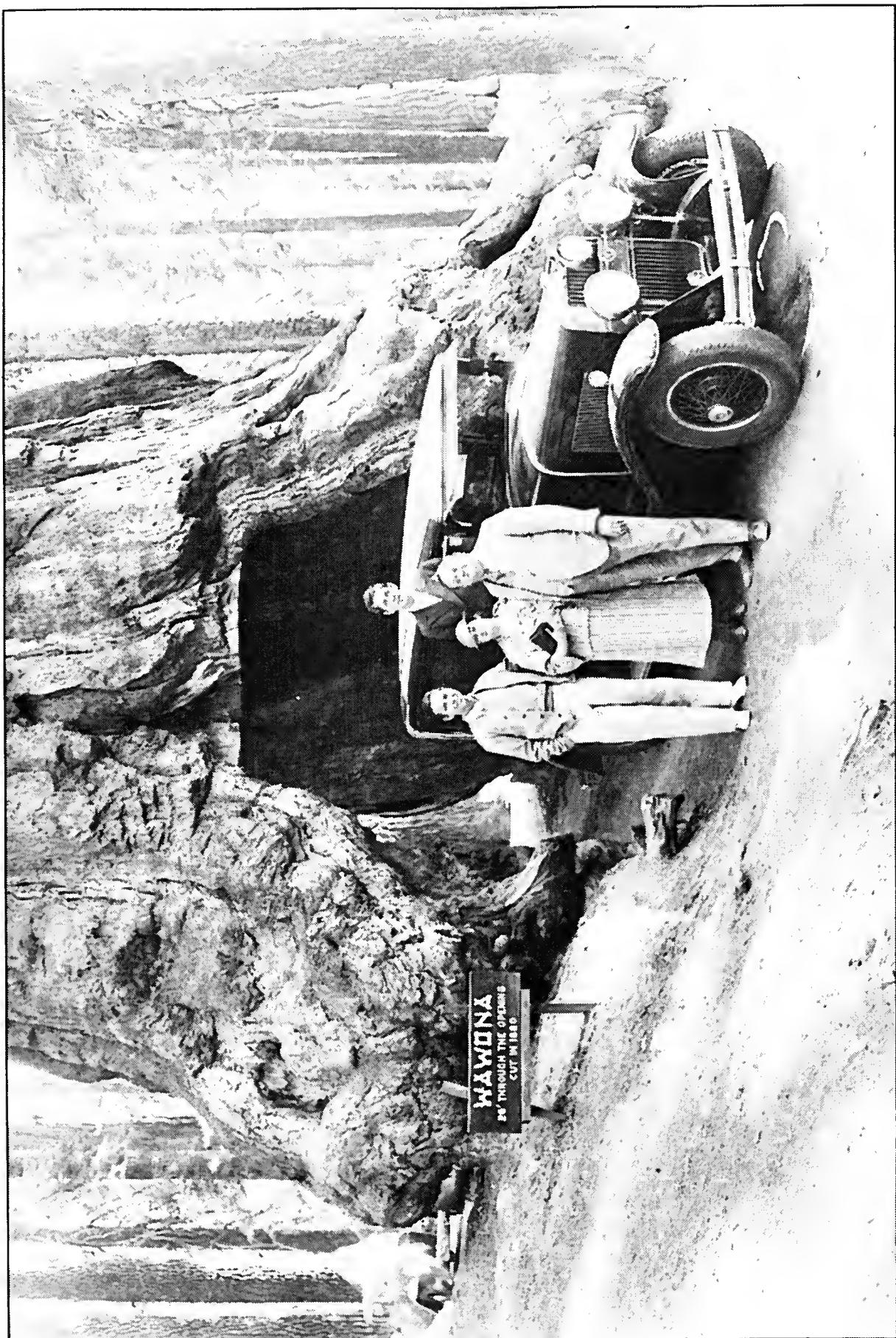
I. Shainin Showroom on Market Street, 1920s.



Left: The Shenson brothers,
aged three and eight.

Bottom: Jess Shenson, age two,
and his father, Louis Shenson.





The Shenson family at Wawona, Yosemite, ca. 1935.



Dr. Ben Shenson, Rose Shenson, and Dr. Jess Shenson, 1950s.

Photograph by F. Ramsdell Cummings



Momma and Daddy Bray with Jess Shenson in Hawaii, September 6, 1953.

Photograph by Billy Howell



Carrie Wores in 1971.

Photograph by Charles Okamura, Honolulu Advertiser



Wores painting entitled "Iris Garden, Hori-Kiri, Tokyo," a gift from the U.S. government to Japan as presented by President and Mrs. Clinton to the Emperor of Japan, December, 1995.



Dr. Jess Shenson and some of the young artists he has sponsored. Top: Bryn Terfel (with St. Honoré cake), photograph copyright David Allen; bottom: Sarah Chang, November 4, 1997, Cal Performances.



Jess Shenson and diva Licia Albanese at the 1997 San Francisco Opera opening, the San Francisco War Memorial, September 1997.

IV A LONG INVOLVEMENT WITH THE MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM AND OTHER ASSOCIATIONS

[Interview 5: July 25, 1997]##

The Merola Program in the Early Years: the 1950s

Crawford: Today we are going to begin talking about the Merola Opera Program.

Shenson: Yes, and I'll qualify some of these remarks in that some of them are sort of, shall we say, second hand. I've been involved with the Merola Opera Program for a long time.

Mary Louise Schwabacher, who became Mary Louise Rosenberg, and I were very good friends for many years. As a matter of fact I think I might have mentioned to you that when I graduated from Lowell High School in 1938 (a long time ago) I took her to my senior prom. Of course you know that James Schwabacher was one of the founders of the Merola Opera Program and remained president for many years, and it was Mary Louise who asked me if I would like to join the group.

I said yes, and my first meeting was held in Schwabacher & Frey on Market Street in Mr. Schwabacher, Sr.'s office. He had passed away I think in '52, just a few years after my father died. Jimmy took over his father's position with Schwabacher & Frey, and my first meeting was in Jimmy's office.

Crawford: He was probably still singing at that point, wasn't he?

Shenson: Yes, he was. Mrs. Stanley Powell was on the board, and Michael Pisani was on the board. It was really the very beginning, because I think it was back in 1954 that the first Merola Opera Program Auditions were held. You know that when Gaetano Merola passed away unexpectedly at Stern Grove during a performance of

Madame Butterfly, who was there to continue on? Kurt Herbert Adler was the chorus director and it was the logical choice to ask him to carry on until a permanent director would be available. As you know, twenty-five years later he celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary as director of our San Francisco Opera.

Crawford: Was that a surprise? Did you think that Robert Watt Miller, who was then president of the board, would have gotten someone from Germany?

Shenson: No. Of course I was really not that much involved with the politics behind the scenes. I don't know. It never entered my mind, basically, because I was still a little bit on the young side and not that exposed; although, as I told you, my exposure to opera started long before the opera house was built. Our mother used to take us to the opera in the Civic Auditorium, and I ushered in the opera house when I was going to Lowell High School for two and a half years: '36, '37, and then part of '38. The golden years.

Crawford: Certainly all the great artists came to San Francisco.

Shenson: Yes. So the Merola Opera Program was established on the recommendation of Kurt Herbert Adler, the general director, in memory of Gaetano Merola, who was always interested in young artists.

Crawford: How did Mr. Merola's interest express itself?

Shenson: He listened to young singers and encouraged them if he felt that they had potential.

Initially, I think it was more or less just an audition program and if there was someone who did well, they were encouraged. First of all, the name Merola Opera Program has undergone several changes. I can remember it was Merola Memorial Fund. I think maybe that was the first one, which of course epitomized the fact that this was a memorial for Gaetano Merola.

Crawford: And that was simply auditions, not any kind of a program?

Shenson: No program. Then it started out as a short program. Today, as you may know, it's a ten-week program, but it was much shorter in those early days and there were not as many participants. Today there are between twenty and twenty-three young singers that are invited after auditioning throughout the United States. More recently, also, there are three apprentice

coaches. And as you know today we have a lot of master classes during the ten-week program.

So the program, you might say, was one of the first of its kind to first of all have auditions, invite young singers (and I stress the word young) that were felt to have potential to San Francisco for a training course. It varied in length initially, but today it's ten weeks. I think today, many years later, it's still considered one of the best of its kind. There are so many similar programs, but I think young artists would take the Merola Opera Program over other similar programs, if they are selected.

Major Developments

Crawford: What have been the major changes?

Shenson: I can remember when Kurt Adler was here the Merola Opera Program was focused on finding young singers. They would come here, the staff would listen to these young artists, see the quality and type of voice, and then select an opera which could be performed at Stern Grove. Now, of course, as you know, we also go to Villa Montalvo, and before Villa Montalvo, through Otto Meyer it was the Paul Masson Vineyards.

Today they know ahead of time what operas are going to be sung, both at Stern Grove and at Villa Montalvo. Consequently, when the auditions are held in the fall and winter they will be listening for voices that can be used for both of these operas.

If you look at the dossier on these people for this year, for instance, there are still some young ones, but for the most part they are a bit older and almost without exception they have appeared with opera companies. Some of them have their Ph.D. in music. Another thing that is interesting is that this year I think more are married than used to be.

Crawford: Does that present a difficulty?

Shenson: Not a difficulty, but now the Merola Opera Program I would say is more for the young professional; in the early days it was for the young singer. But most of these are professionals to begin with. I mean, James--he's professional.

Crawford: Yes. We're talking about James Westman, a young baritone from Toronto, who just won a major competition. So from that first meeting at Schwabacher & Frey you set out to discover new talent and encourage them and help their careers. Were you part of the audition process?

Shenson: No, not ever.

Crawford: Who did the auditions?

Shenson: The musical staff. This week on Wednesday at Merola is Matthew Farruggio Day. Do you remember him?

Crawford: Oh, yes. He came out from Chicago with Mr. Adler in the 1940s.

Shenson: Yes. In the early days, the program had a regular staff and we had a small clerical staff office. Marilyn Mercur was there in the beginning, Alice Cunningham for many years, then Rachael Milan--

Crawford: Was Mr. Adler a part of those meetings?

Shenson: No, he would appear on occasion, but the board really set the policy. He was always in the background, as he was with everything relative to San Francisco Opera, [laughs] and was encouraging. He would be at some of the auditions, the finals, and things like that.

Grand Finals Auditions

Crawford: Talk about the finals, because those have been somewhat controversial.

Shenson: Well, initially it was very low-keyed. In fact, when you look at this you'll see that it wasn't anything like it has been in the last several years. In what way do you feel they have been controversial?

Crawford: Some of the young singers have felt that there was a lot of pressure leading up to the Grand Finals, which in fact were not auditions because they had pretty well finished the program.

Shenson: Well, yes, and last year or the year before they changed the name to the Grand Finale. I was president for three years, and we have always announced from the stage that the evening of the finals was not the evening that decided the winners, it was

only a part of it. The awards were given relative to the performance of each of these young artists during the ten weeks: taking into consideration how much one perhaps improved from the beginning to the end, their performance at Stern Grove, their performance at Paul Masson Vineyards or Villa Montalvo, and how they did during their classes.

Mind you, of course, the classes consist of not only coaching but of diction, of acting, of fencing--every aspect of opera--which is important to stress because I don't know if all the programs similar to ours do that. It's one thing to get a lot of coaching, of course, and experience in singing; but all the ramifications of opera are important as well.

Now the Grand Finals have been changed to the Grand Finale, and this year it's being changed even more, because in the past there were several monetary awards that were announced and that has changed.

Let me read from the brochure: "The Merola Opera Program has seen hundreds of artists pass through its doors, including Janis Martin, Sylvia McNair, Ruth Ann Swenson, Carol Van Ness, Deborah Voigt, Dolora Zajic, Brian Ozawa, Jess Thomas, Thomas Hampson, and Ann Panagulias. The program culminates in the Merola Grand Finale, an exhilarating afternoon of song. The Merola Opera Program is the cornerstone of the San Francisco Opera Center, the training and community outreach wing of the San Francisco Opera. Merola Opera Program offers ten weeks of intensive training and performance opportunities each summer to young singers and coaches selected from nationwide auditions."

Crawford: One of my questions was about great singers who have emerged from the program, and you've answered it. Is it a better program than the Met's program, Houston and so on?

Shenson: Well, artistically I am not sure, but apparently here they do get more hands-on, one-to-one help and the artistic staff is outstanding.

Crawford: Is that what they say?

Fundraising for the Program

Shenson: Yes. One of the things, I think, that has made the Merola Opera Program so successful in San Francisco is the

sponsorships, because, as you can appreciate, the budget is terribly high and we've got to raise lots and lots of money.

Crawford: That was another question. How about the fundraising?

Shenson: For the fundraising we fortunately have great support from our people here in the greater Bay Area, and some outside of the greater Bay Area, too. Here again, I think one of the secrets of the Merola Opera Program has been its one-to-one relationship, not only with the singers but with the supporters. Sometimes you get a lot of mail, but I think over the years the Merola staff, particularly, has tried to individualize many things, and we do have many great supporters.

We try not to have too many fundraisers. Every year we will have a major gala--this year, 1997, we had it in March at the Marriot Hotel, and Thomas Hampson was our guest artist. Tom went through the Merola Opera Program in 1980, and this year, as in the recent past, there was also the Opera Center singers. He worked with them since he was a Merola Opera Program graduate himself.

Crawford: Yes, what a good idea.

Shenson: It was a spectacular evening. The evening started with cocktails and then a silent auction. The rooms were very large, fortunately, and it was through one of our board members, Mrs. Alain Piallat, since her husband is very involved with the Marriot Hotels, that we held it there. These rooms in the hotels can be made smaller or larger because they have partitions and we used the two largest rooms. With a blare of trumpets, the wall opens up, and there is a spectacular sit-down dinner following the silent auction and opera fair.

Crawford: Very operatic.

Shenson: Oh, extremely so. Minimal speeches, beautiful music, and a gorgeous evening. This year we netted over a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars for that evening. You know, so many other organizations will have similar galas, but they pay maybe fifty cents on the dollar just to have the party; but fortunately much was donated and so it's a very rewarding thing. That's our major fundraiser.

Crawford: And that's kind of the beginning of the Merola year, isn't it? March?

Shenson: Not really. Actually, the new participants come in at the beginning of June so June would be the beginning of the Merola year.

Crawford: Yes, but it gets people thinking about their memberships which also must be very revenue producing.

Shenson: Oh, absolutely. There are many people who give additional funds toward grants. The participants at the Grand Finale can apply for grants, and if they are awarded one, that takes the place of awards or prizes, you might say.

Crawford: How are the applications evaluated?

Shenson: From the first day to the last day of the program the participants are evaluated by the entire musical staff.

Crawford: The sponsorships seem to work well.

Shenson: They do. Many people, such as my brother and I, would sponsor a young artist and get to know them on a one-to-one basis. We might take them out for a little dinner or some social function so they didn't feel as though they were just here to go to school and go home at the end of the day. Frequently they also have classes in the evenings.

Crawford: They get in their tuxedos a fair amount, don't they?

Shenson: Well, to a degree, but they are usually in their jeans for their classes. [laughs]

Creation of the S.F. Opera Center: Adler Fellows

Crawford: How about the musical direction over the years?

Shenson: Well, as a board member, and even as a past president, we never really get involved with the artistic aspect. In those earlier days there was the Merola Opera Program with its board, there was Western Opera Theater and its board, and at one point there was the Spring Opera and its board--all three independent entities.

Spring Opera gave many Merola graduates a tremendous opportunity, but unfortunately it was not continued. In one sense the same thing happened with Western Opera Theater. It continues, but its board disbanded.

As you probably know, when Mr. Adler announced his retirement there was a search committee, but then he came to the search committee and said to the San Francisco Opera board that he would like them to consider Mr. Terry McEwen as his successor. Did you know Terry McEwen?

Crawford: Yes. He had been a recording executive.

Shenson: Yes, that's right. He knew many of the great artists extremely well. He was a charming gentleman. After just a few years, however, he suddenly announced his resignation because of health reasons. It was very close to the time that Kurt Herbert Adler passed away. When he found out that Terry McEwen had offered his resignation he said that he would be happy to come back temporarily to help but that did not happen.

In any case, it was Terry McEwen who established the San Francisco Opera Center. He always referred to the Merola Opera Program as the cornerstone of the San Francisco Opera Center. He incorporated Merola Opera Program, Western Opera Theater, and the Adler Fellows as the San Francisco Opera Center.

Crawford: Was that McEwen's idea, then, to get a stable of singers that could be then used in the parent company?

Shenson: Yes. In other words, you go through the Merola Opera Program, then from that group I think at least half of the twenty young singers are invited to Western Opera Theater, and from that group they will select four or six as Adler Fellows.

Crawford: How was that decision made?

Shenson: The general director and the Opera Center musical staff.

Crawford: Is that a decision about, "This fellow we could use, this baritone," and so on?

Shenson: I think it might influence it. I think Adler Fellows are chosen because the repertoire is known for the next year or two, and they keep that in mind. "Well, this young tenor has really done extremely well, and I think we can use him in this role, and this role, and that role next year." It may not be the final decision, but it influences it. They get a lot of opportunity, you know, as an Adler Fellow. I think it's almost a twelve-month contract, and usually you're invited back a second year.

Crawford: That's really a kind of a launching opportunity, isn't it?

Shenson: Oh, yes. And then a technicality: I think there is something like "right of first refusal." After you finish the Adler Fellowship, if some other opera company wants you, San Francisco has right of first refusal. So they do keep their interest in a lot of these young people after they finish their Adler Fellowship.

Before it was the Adler Fellowship it was called the Affiliate Artist Program--a new program. I think it was not only for San Francisco; it was nationwide. The company would underwrite the artists, which would today be called Adler Fellows. But once the Affiliate Artist finished--I mean, it was only for so many years--and at that point, it was decided by Terry McEwen that we should continue the program as Adler Fellows in honor of Kurt Herbert Adler.

The Merola Opera Program is still legally independent of the Opera Center in the sense that we have our own board of directors and we have our tax deductible status with the State of California. We have our own treasury and we handle our own money.

Crawford: Your own money. That's important.

Shenson: Oh, yes; but as everybody knows, a lot of the money goes to the Opera Center which helps with the Merola Program.

Sponsoring MOP Singers#

Crawford: We've talked about fundraising, we've talked about development. Maybe you would like to talk about your sponsored singers and what that entails.

Shenson: Well, my brother and I and our late mother sponsored thirty-two young participants during the past twenty years.

Crawford: Is it appropriate to say how much it costs to sustain a singer for this ten-week period?

Shenson: Sponsoring an individual singer, apprentice coach or stage director provides direct support by underwriting the major expenses of the program including a weekly stipend, private coaching, housing and round-trip transportation. The sponsorships are: Patron \$2,000; Maestro \$1,500; Guardian \$1,000; Angel \$750. A full sponsorship is \$5,250. Sponsors of the upper three levels must be a Merola member at \$250 or more.

Chairing the San Francisco District Metropolitan Opera Auditions: 1971-1978

Crawford: What about the Metropolitan Opera Auditions?

Shenson: There was a little concern about my involvement with the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and some people asked, "Well, Jess, what's the matter? Are you giving up Merola and getting involved with the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions?" I told them I could do both, and it turned out that it worked out extremely well. We even had Kurt Herbert Adler as one of our judges for the Met auditions.

Crawford: Talk about those, would you?

Shenson: Well, in early 1970 I went to a little gathering of musical friends and they were talking about the fact that the Metropolitan Opera National Council did have auditions throughout the country, and San Francisco was one of the districts of the Western Region. The Western Region in those days comprised California, Nevada, and Arizona. Dr. John Tegnell, who is now retired, was with the music department at San Francisco State University and through this department he would hold some auditions for the Metropolitan Opera National Council.

Then Mr. Alexander Saunderson, who was president of the Metropolitan Opera National Council for nine years, came up from his home in Santa Barbara and was anxious that a group of musical citizens of the Bay area establish a committee to help John Tegnell with the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions is San Francisco.

Crawford: These were district auditions and the finalists here would then go on to the regional auditions, which were held in Los Angeles?

Shenson: Yes, that's right. I remember Alma Yoder and Christine Winter and several people here in San Francisco decided to form a little committee to help John Tegnell. The chairman of that committee was Herbert Hoover. Not the Herbert Hoover. Herb was a very nice fellow and was very active in musical circles. Herbert Hoover was the chairman, but then he stepped down for some personal reasons and I became the acting chairman. I guess I was chairman of the San Francisco District Metropolitan Opera Auditions for seven years, and of course was also on the Merola Opera Program board.

Crawford: What years?

Shenson: I first became chairman of the San Francisco District Metropolitan Auditions in 1971. In those days the Western Region was composed of California, Nevada and Arizona and the San Francisco District was part of the Western Region. Auditions were held here and usually one or two finalists were sent to Los Angeles for the Western Regional Finals. Initially it was the semifinals and then approximately ten from the Western Region were selected for the Finals. From this group usually one or two were sent to New York City to participate in the national semifinals from which ten were selected as finalists of the Metropolitan National Council throughout the United States. I should mention that San Francisco District Auditions were all held at San Francisco State University. Dr. Paul Romberg was very kind in letting us use those facilities and in particular it was Dr. John Tegnell who was the person who ran the auditions and was on the faculty of San Francisco State University. Originally when we started the "new" committee, there were only a very few people who helped underwrite the San Francisco District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. When I stepped down, seven years later, we must have had nearly three hundred people that supported the auditions. Unfortunately, due to circumstances, all of the original committee did resign shortly after I stepped down as chairman.

Just to deviate a moment from that, I can remember Dolora Zajic. She was from Reno, Nevada.

Crawford: Such a big voice.

Shenson: She was the first-place winner there and was sent down to Los Angeles for the regional finals. When she went, she had to fly, and it was the first time she was in an airplane. Can you imagine how many airplanes she has been in since?

Crawford: To every opera capital of the world.

Shenson: I was talking before about Ellen Kerrigan. She first went through the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions here in San Francisco. I think she was working in a bank as a bank teller, a very pretty young girl, and I can remember that vivid red dress she wore at the finals. Well, to make a long story short, she did win the district auditions and went down to Los Angeles, but I don't think she went to New York. Then she came and went through the Merola Opera Program. She was the young lady that Ben and I sponsored in 1978, a long time ago now and of course we're still the very best of good friends. She is married to Baker Peeples.

Crawford: Oh, really?

Shenson: Yes. In fact, Ben and I went to her wedding. The other day I saw her in front of the Davies Symphony Hall, I think it was before the San Francisco Youth Orchestra concert, and there was this young man with her. I took a second look and she nodded--it was her son. He's as tall as she is today and apparently quite a musician. She also has a little daughter. But, yes, I keep in touch. She herself personally is very helpful to the San Francisco Opera Guild. She goes into the schools with the Opera Guild and talks about opera.

Crawford: Is she singing with Donald Pippin still?

Shenson: Yes. I can remember one of the most exciting nights--the night that my mother, brother, and I were sitting in our seats, row G [at the opera]. I knew, of course, that there had been a sudden change in cast--Montserrat Caballé, (who became my patient several years later), was to sing Roberta Devereux--and was ill.

There were only three or four sopranos in the world that could sing that role, and no one knew what to do. It just so happened that Ellen had learned a few of the arias, because the Junior League occasionally would have a lunch featuring an artist who would sing excerpts from one of the operas. Because of this Ellen knew a few of the arias from Roberta Devereux. This was still in Kurt Herbert Adler's time, and he decided that he would see if they could lock up Ellen Kerrigan in a room to see if she could learn the entire role. [laughs]

The night came--it's like yesterday--the curtain went up, and Ellen Kerrigan came out. I didn't believe it was her. She was so regally dressed with fantastic makeup and she sang like an angel. I tell you it was just astonishing. She just stopped the show, a standing ovation, incredible. It was probably one of the highlights of my entire opera-going career. [laughs]

Afterwards, it just so happens, the wine industry or some wine people in France had planned to have a reception onstage in honor of Caballé, and we were invited. My brother was not with us at the moment, but my mother and I were walking across backstage and Kurt Adler was coming along with Ellen on his arm. He said, "Oh, Mrs. Shenson, I want you to meet our star tonight, Ellen Kerrigan." And Ellen said to Kurt Adler, "The Shensons have been my sponsors."

Crawford: Is she still singing? I don't read about her now.

Shenson: She has been very much involved in Pippin's Pocket Opera.

Crawford: He thinks very highly of her.

Shenson: And also the Lamplighters. She's very involved with the Lamplighters. I know when we had my brother's memorial concert a year ago February, she and Baker sang at Temple Emanu-El as part of the program. She is still very, very involved with music and the San Francisco Opera Guild. She is one of our young artists that I will always remember.

Crawford: Leslie Richards is a wonderful artist.

Shenson: Yes, Leslie, and James Busterud are doing well. And of course Cheryl Parrish is on the international stage. And there was White Eagle--an American Indian, very flamboyant, got so much publicity--he passed away.

Crawford: Very young?

Shenson: Yes, very young. And then in 1986, Michael Reese Davis. He's on the roster still at the Met. But of course I'm the closest of all to Ann Panagulias.

Crawford: A wonderful artist.

Shenson: Oh, absolutely. She is living in New York now, but she is going to be here in the fall as a cover.

Crawford: Do they have a formal cover system?

Shenson: Yes, they do. In 1986 Ann Panagulias was one I sponsored, and we've kept up our friendship since then. Did you see Lulu?

Crawford: Oh, yes.

Shenson: I remember there was a Sunday matinee, her last performance singing Lulu, and the Merola Opera Program decided we would have a little dinner for her after the Sunday matinee, because she was the toast of the San Francisco Opera.

We had tickets for the matinee, but people were standing on the steps in front of the Opera House with hundred dollar bills, wanting to buy a ticket to go to the opera because of the outstanding reviews it had received. Lulu was not everyone's favorite opera, and particularly some of the old-timers, and when they saw Lulu was on the schedule for the season they had given their tickets to their friends or their help. But Ann made it come alive, and then it became popular!

She has also been at Santa Fe and in Europe. She keeps an active career going, and she loves San Francisco. She's a lovely, lovely, hard-working person.

Then I have kept in touch with Cynthia Jacoby, who went to Germany. You know, European countries underwrite and support opera so much more than in this country.

Crawford: They do, don't they?

Shenson: Oh yes. And then Hong-Shen Li, who was on the Met roster, is a very, very nice young man. Now he and his wife and baby son live in New York. Actually, my brother and I sponsored him two years in a row. The next year was Mary Mills who is now on the international circuit. And then Zheng Zhau who lives in New York, and there's an interesting story about him.

Kurt Adler and his wife Nancy went to Shanghai in about 1981 and went to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. The next year he brought over a young Chinese singer who was a little bit older than the average Merola participant and spoke no English but blended in beautifully and had a marvelous voice.

We got to know this singer quite well, and when my brother and I went to China for the first time in 1984, we were in Shanghai and this young man came by the hotel to pick us up, and took us to his very modest little apartment where his wife had cooked dinner. At dinner was a very young Chinese singer, Zheng Zhau, who was studying at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Several years later he auditioned for the Merola Opera Program and was accepted.

When he came here for the Merola Program they told him that he would sing in Lucia di Lammermoor in Stern Grove or Villa Montalvo. When his wife delivered a baby girl, they named the little girl Lucia!

He did very well here, and stayed on, but finances became a great problem. Ben and I tried to help him as much as we could. We went to several Chinese doctors who had means and interest and we told them about this Chinese singer. We were hoping perhaps some of them could help, but nobody helped.

Crawford: Do they not have that volunteerism?

Shenson: No, at least not in this instance. So, long story short, they did leave and went to Florida where they knew people, so they didn't have any rent and had other help. Unfortunately,

however, they had to send the baby back to Shanghai to be raised by grandparents.

Crawford: So she could work?

Shenson: So she could work and he could work. And it just so happened that my brother and I went to Shanghai later on, and I wrote ahead of time to the family, and through a contact, they brought the baby and the grandparents to the hotel where we were staying. I took a picture of the baby and the grandparents and had a little gift for the baby. The photograph turned out very good and certainly pleased Lucia's parents!

Crawford: How has the career gone?

Shenson: The career has gone very well. He's on the Metropolitan Opera roster, and the baby has been back with them several years and she's growing up.

Crawford: That's a very nice story about a career that made it, because I often have the feeling when they're married it's hard.

Shenson: Yes, it's so difficult. But that was one of the interesting things, I think. Well, there are others--Anita Johnson is a black girl who has done well, and she is in New York on the roster and keeps in touch. Ledi Paparisto, I haven't heard from.

Crawford: She was our first Albanian, wasn't she?

Shenson: That's right, and she had a problem with the language. I don't think she realized the full scope of the Merola Program.

Others we have sponsored in the Merola Opera Program are: Mali Henigman, Ruth Golden, Rachel Rosales, Karen Wickland, Cynthia Jacoby, Timothy Sarris, Man-Hua Gao, Richard Nickol, James Caputo, Elizabeth Grohowski, Claudia Waite, Sari Gruber, Norah Amsellam, Anita Johnson, Kamel Boutros, and Marcel Riejans.

Crawford: Let us talk about the board. I was surprised at the size of the Merola board.

Shenson: Yes, it's thirty-plus.

Crawford: Is that large for musical organizations?

Shenson: Yes, although look at the symphony and the opera. There are many more on each. Ours is a working board, which is the most important thing.

Crawford: How many meetings every year?

Shenson: Ten general board meetings, monthly executive committee meetings and many subcommittee meetings. [tape ends]

The Performing Arts Library and Museum

Crawford: You have been active with PALM?

Shenson: Relative to the Performing Arts Library and Museum, now referred to as PALM, I told you way back in the beginning of our visits how involved my brother and I have been with music, thanks to our mother. She used to take us to the Civic Auditorium before the opera house was built for opera and symphonies, and all the great artists such as Rachmaninoff for concerts. I saved programs, and programs, and programs. Of course when I ushered in the Opera House for two and a half years I saved programs and photographs and had them autographed.

So I had a tremendous amount of material, and I fortunately had a big basement, but there's a limit. So what I did at one point was I decided to go through what I had and to save the things I wanted for my personal collection, autographed programs essentially and major programs.

There's the opening of the San Francisco Opera in 1932, the opening of the Metropolitan Opera in New York in September 1966, which fortunately my family and I attended. All major programs and photographs I saved, but the others I decided to place somewhere where they could be used and other people could enjoy them. So that's how I got involved with the Performing Arts Library and Museum. I gave them literally hundreds of programs. Unfortunately, the start of PALM was somewhat of a difficult one. It was one person whose idea made it a reality.

Crawford: Was that Russell Hartley?

Shenson: Yes. Did you know him at all?

Crawford: Very well, because I was the opera press officer, and I used to go to his garage and he would pull photos and reviews out for me. [laughter] He would be so pleased to see what's happened.

Shenson: Yes, he had a tremendous collection. Well, I gave Russell Hartley everything except those certain ones, and they will get them eventually. It was Barbara Bladen and Robert Commanday who gave PALM a lot of publicity, until finally there was a room in the Opera House that was given to Russell. Had he passed away at that point? I think he could have passed away before that was established in the Opera House, but I remember that little rickety home he had and then the little shop in Mill Valley. But he had the vision.

When the collection moved into the Opera House it was very crowded quarters, but at that point it was very well organized and very well done. Then they started trying to raise money, and they had a good board. I can remember one evening I went to a PALM party, and Otto Meyer came over and said, "Would you want to join the board? There's not much obligation." So I've been on it ever since.

You know how tight space is in the Opera House, even after they built the addition. Do you remember when they built that addition?

We thought there would be so much room, but the space was very tight, and we had to move. It was Alan Becker who devoted so much time to PALM.

Then we found the present place on Grove Street. We've sort of outgrown that now, but it's still working out satisfactorily. It has just been announced that San Francisco State University is going to join forces with us, but the details have to be worked out.

Crawford: That's marvelous. A good collaboration, and it looks like they can help financially.

Shenson: Everybody will gain from that. So the details--we'll know more about them in a little while. It's going to help PALM, because of course the expenses go on, the space is getting a little tight, the building is probably going to be sold, and it's in a state of turmoil. But PALM has done a tremendous job and is actually acknowledged throughout the country, and Margaret Norton has done a yeoman's job with a marvelous staff. A lot of people don't know that we exist, because it's nothing glamorous. That's the major problem, and that's why it's difficult to get local support.

Crawford: Are they still collecting? Are they trying to document opera and ballet and all the arts?

Shenson: Oh absolutely. Because they have all the archives of the opera and a lot of the symphony. They have the programs from the Standard Symphony of the Air.

San Francisco Opera Board: 1992-1997

Crawford: We should talk about the opera board.

Shenson: Yes. To be honest, I'm on the opera board, but I'm one of many. I've enjoyed going to all the meetings and being brought up to date on all of the activities, and as you know, these past couple of years have been very difficult ones. It's a year and a half that we've been out of the Opera House, but when the house opens in September it's going to be spectacular, and everyone when they walk through the door in the foyer and look around their breath will be taken away because it will be sparkling new. But then they're going to say in the next breath, "Well, why did it take so long?" People just do not know what is involved with the retrofitting.

Tremendous changes have gone on behind the scenes, but by the same token they have bent over backwards to make no physical changes to the building compared to when it opened in 1932. Of course, when you're standing in the foyer, you don't realize that there are three floors below you of beautiful quarters for the chorus, for the musicians, for the artists themselves. The ladies' facilities have been increased tremendously, which is very important. [laughs] And I know that I've had the occasion to get a hard hat tour of the Opera House and went to the very, very tip top, and I pulled on the chandelier to make sure that it wouldn't fall like it did in Phantom of the Opera.

When the curtain goes up on Friday night, September the fifth, it will be the exact copy of the original curtain, because they had a piece of the original fabric, and Scalamanders in New York has woven the curtain to be identically the same. And the backstage will be state of the art. Not very much had been done backstage except for the physical addition where that little parking area used to be, but as far as the technical part backstage, not that much had been done.

Crawford: Was John Priest in charge of the refurbishing?

Shenson: Yes. He was very active, very active indeed.

Crawford: You've been a Tuesday night operagoer, I think. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

Shenson: When the Opera House opened it was a very short season, and we always would go on a Tuesday night and Friday night for many years. Of course in those early days, the golden days of the opera--the cast is excellent now--but the cast in those days was really the who's who of opera.

Many of the artists would sing more than one role, and they didn't have a month's rehearsal; maybe they don't have a month's rehearsal now, but they are here for almost a month. So a lot more preparation goes into it now than it did in those early days.

Crawford: Did you associate with the artists in those early days?

Shenson: Some of them, yes. Licia Albanese, who I've invited to the opening this year, and others.

Crawford: Well, let's talk about that relationship.

Shenson: In the forties, Licia Albanese sang more Mimos and Madame Butterflies than anyone I've ever known. I think I've told you, this past New Year's Eve when I was in New York I was Midori's guest at the New York Philharmonic, and then at eleven-thirty I walked down to Seventh Avenue--on New Year's Eve, can you believe that? If anyone had told me that I would walk near Times Square I'd say, "You're crazy, not me." [laughs] But I was on my way to Barbetta. Barbetta is a very old and very, very special Italian restaurant on about Forty-Sixth Street, and I got there at quarter til twelve, just fifteen minutes before midnight, and I was the guest of Licia Albanese, her son, her daughter-in-law, and a friend from San Francisco, and we toasted in the New Year of 1997. We've been very close friends over the years. She was so fond of my mother and Ben too; we had many happy times together.

Crawford: Is she teaching still?

Shenson: She does some teaching and she has the Licia Albanese/Puccini Foundation in New York. She goes to Italy and auditions, and she auditions in this country. She is doing a great deal for young artists. In the fall of this year she is having another gala where a lot of these young people will sing to help raise

money to support her foundation. So she's very, very active in the world of opera and young singers.

Supporting the San Francisco Symphony: The 1987 Shenson Young Artist Debut Fund

Crawford: Do you want to say something about your symphony association?

Shenson: My brother always enjoyed the symphony almost--almost--as much as I did the opera, but then he was won over to the opera also, and so we supported both. As a matter of fact, my mother and Mrs. Wores had a box (Box W) every Thursday afternoon at the symphony. In those days, Thursday afternoon was a very, very popular afternoon for the symphony. Ladies would charter buses and come up from the Peninsula. They would come from Marin County. They would come from the East Bay. They would make a day of it, and go to lunch. The high point of the week was the Thursday afternoon symphony. So mother, Mrs. Wores, and a whole group of ladies had Box W. Then when Mrs. Wores passed away in 1976, she had given my mother her ticket so my brother and I would spell each other off and take her to the Thursday afternoon symphony. We could work out our office schedule accordingly as long as one of us was in the office.

When it was announced that Davies Symphony Hall was being built, my brother and I felt that we wanted to participate and help funding for the building since we had enjoyed the symphony all of our lives and were San Franciscans. So we did contribute.

When we wanted to pick our three seats, the management was kind enough to give us a tour of Davies Symphony Hall before it officially opened, and we picked out the three seats we wanted, which are very, very good, and I continue to have two of those seats today, ten years later.

I should mention Mrs. Ralph K. Davies and the opera. We had our seats, and I still have all four of them in the Opera House, where I can remember Mrs. Davies so vividly. She was just the most lovely lady, and she had seats just behind us. Her husband always came to the opening night of the opera, but never again. He just wasn't that interested in opera, I guess. Mrs. Davies would always tap my mother on the shoulder and say, "Oh, Mrs. Shenson, I'm so glad you're in your seat, because if you weren't I wouldn't know where I belong."

Unfortunately she is not well now, and I don't think she's been to the opera for several years, at least two or three years--but up until then she would always say, "Oh, how I miss your mother."

My mother, Ben and I were in Davies Symphony Hall on the opening night. We decided that we should do more than just contribute routinely, and in 1987 we established the Shenson Young Artists' Debut Fund.

We said we would sponsor any artist making a debut with the San Francisco Symphony--and under the age of thirty--because we wanted this to be for young artists. There was no specification beyond that, and so many of the young artists that we have sponsored since 1987 have been internationally known before they made their debut with the San Francisco Symphony, but this had to be their first appearance.

I can remember Victoria Mullova, a young Russian violinist the first year. She is very well known now, but those were the early days. I think that she had actually defected from Russia, and it was a very exciting evening with the San Francisco Symphony. Whenever these artists come back we always get to see them. Just as with the Merola Opera Program, we usually try to keep in touch with the young participants that we sponsor.

The next young artist was Emile Naoumoff, and when Ben and I were in Paris one time he took us out to dinner with his wife. I keep in touch with him periodically.

In 1988 it was Anne-Sophie Mutter. Even today we're just the very closest of friends, and you know her reputation as one of the world's finest violinists. She was here in March to give her recital, and of course every seat in Davies Hall was taken.

There was a nice reception after her performance in the Wattis Room, and then I took her, her accompanist, Ruth Felt, and my cousin for dinner afterwards, because, you know, these artists don't eat much before a performance.

Crawford: Was that for San Francisco Performances, then? Because Ruth Felt was involved?

Shenson: Yes, that is correct.

Crawford: So you do sponsorships for various organizations.

Shenson: Well, I'm on the board now of Ruth Felt's San Francisco Performances, and my brother was on the board. In fact, I went to the very first meeting of Ruth Felt's when she was establishing San Francisco Performances about eighteen years ago.

But getting back to the story, it was through Ruth Felt's San Francisco Performances that Anne-Sophie appeared, and we had supper at Act Four. Act Four, you know, the little restaurant around the corner from the Opera House.

Crawford: Is it in the Inn at the Opera?

Shenson: Yes. That hotel was called the New Alden Hotel, and if you excuse the expression, it was considered a "fleabag," but all the artists would stay there. This was many years ago long before the present hotel was totally renovated. So I took Anne-Sophie there, and she always carried her violin, of course--most of these artists do because they are so valuable. Well, the maitre d' came to take her violin, and I said, "No, don't touch that!" As she carried it off, I said to the maitre d'--"That is a very, very expensive violin!!!" And when she sat down she shook her head and sighed with relief. [laughter]

Crawford: Is that her personal violin? Or did she borrow that from a museum?

Shenson: No, that's hers. After we met her in '88 she got married, and when the first baby came it was a little girl. The announcement was in German, of course, and on the front it said, "The quartet is now complete." You opened it up and it announced the birth of her daughter, and on the left side was a photograph of a man's hand with a wedding band, a woman's hand with a wedding band, the paw of a little dog, and the new baby's hand.

Crawford: That's the quartet?

Shenson: Yes. [laughter]

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Shenson: The next one that we sponsored in '89 was Midori. And the list goes on and on. Some really very, very important artists such as Joshua Bell, Evgeny Kissin, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Annie Chang, Matt Haimovitz, Andrea Lucchesini, Dang Thai Son, Gil Shaham, Gary Hoffman, Helene Grimaud, Alexander Shtarkman, Sarah Chang, Ming Chiel Lui, Chee-Yun, Corey Cerovsek, Valery Kuleshov, Benjamin Pasternak, Daniel Gaisford, Gustavo Romero,

Anje Weithaas, Leila Josefowicz, Fabio Bidini, Michelle DeYoung, Andrea Haefliger, and Nikolai Lugansky. I think I looked at this coming season, which opens the third of September, and in this coming season, nine of these people that we've sponsored over the years will be coming back.

Crawford: Do these three organizations--Cal Performances, San Francisco Performances, and the symphony--do they call you and ask you if you would sponsor someone? Do you have the choice of who they are?

Shenson: Yes. The symphony, taking first things first, they know what I like, and once the roster is completed, they will give me the dossier on all the young artists who are making their debut. I can look it over and see which ones I want to sponsor. In other words, I don't tell them who I would like them to engage, but they will tell me who they have engaged and who I can sponsor.

Crawford: And are you responsible for their artistic fees?

Shenson: Yes. Before last season, for about three or four years, we had the Shenson Young Artists' Debut Series on a Sunday afternoon at two o'clock. It was a recital that these young people did, an individual recital, and then MTT (Michael Tilson Thomas) said the artists would get more exposure if he put them into the mainstream to appear with the full symphony for three or four performances because then they would get more reviews. That was started last season, and I will continue to sponsor this series.

Crawford: And Cal Performances?

Shenson: Robert Cole, the director, came to us four years ago, knowing of our interest in young artists and the fact that we were somewhat philanthropic, and asked if we would underwrite an artist that would be on his series. We gave it thought and fortunately were in a position to do so and sponsored Awadagin Pratt, a black pianist who is quite controversial because he sits on a little stool at the piano instead of a piano bench.

Crawford: And plays up?

Shenson: Yes. [laughter] He was the first artist, and then last year, it was Bryn Terfel, the great Welsh bass-baritone.

His fee was really quite high, but I asked Robert Cole when the recital was going to be. He told me that he was to make

his debut on November the second. Without any hesitation, I said "yes" and it was done in memory of my brother, whose birthday was November first.

It was quite an experience, because this fellow is really so nice. They called and said that he was going to have his recital on a Saturday and asked if I could come over on a Friday morning because he loved to play golf. They had it all set up at the Claremont Country Club, and they wanted me to play golf with him. I said, "Well, I really don't want to embarrass him because I don't know how to play golf." [laughs] So they asked me to lunch and, wanting to meet him, I said of course.

That was November the first, and a very, very good friend of ours always would send us each two birthday cakes on our birthdays. One is from Stella Bakery down in North Beach because they have a special one, the Saint Honoré cake. Do you know that?

Crawford: Oh, sure. The cream cake.

Shenson: Yes, and another one. However, the year before last she did not send them on November first. She called me and said that she felt so badly. She had wanted to send those cakes for my brother, but some people had told her that it would upset me. I told her that I understood, and so last year she sent them. So when I went over to the Claremont Country Club, Bryn was just coming off the fairway. He's a big boy!

When I brought the Saint Honoré cake over for lunch, I explained to him that it was my brother's birthday that day, and then the waiter cut the cake, and as we were finishing, I looked over and there was no cake on Bryn's plate; he had eaten the whole thing so quickly. [laughter] The waiter was already putting it in the box, but I said, "Please, give this gentleman another piece." So he got a second piece of birthday cake. When we left the club the hostess was carrying the cake, but she said "Bryn, you had better take this back with you and have it for tea." [laughter] So he did.

He'll be here for our fall season doing Marriage of Figaro. I'll miss my Tuesday night performance, but I will see him, of course. I promised him another Saint Honoré cake. [laughter]

Crawford: I notice Benjamin Pasternak. Is that Boris Pasternak's relation?

Shenson: I don't think so.

Crawford: Well, that's a marvelous involvement that you have, because you have really dedicated a great deal to young artists, and that really started with the Merola Program, didn't it? The focus on the young ones.

Shenson: That's right. Yes, it did.

The Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund: 1977

Crawford: When did you set up the Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund?

Shenson: That was '77.

Crawford: And that is in your mother's name, of course.

Shenson: Yes. Originally it was just the Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund, but my mother passed away in 1983, fourteen years ago, and the name was changed to the Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund.

Crawford: That was presented as a prize as I remember, wasn't it?

Shenson: Not a prize, no. It was called the Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund to sponsor two singers. Now, this year when you look at the program you will see that we also have a fund in my brother's name for the Merola Program. So funds from that will be given as a grant.

The San Francisco Youth Orchestra and Asian Youth Orchestra: 1989

Crawford: Good. Do you want to talk now about the San Francisco Youth Orchestra?

Shenson: Yes. The San Francisco Youth Orchestra, of course, is well-established. Paul Bissinger, who has really been terribly involved over the years and worked very hard, has stepped down. Do you know Ann McWilliams? Ann McWilliams's son, Keith McWilliams, is now chairman of the San Francisco Youth Orchestra.

The San Francisco Youth Orchestra does a great job and has an international reputation. They travel to Europe and the

Orient. Again, I'm on that board and I support them. In fact last year in memory of my brother I gave them funds to help underwrite the "titled violin chairs," and also additional money so they could buy the necessary tickets so some of these young people could go to the regular symphony.

Crawford: Oh, that's a wonderful idea.

Shenson: It's an active organization, but I'm just one of many on the board. It's not a big board, but here again a working board.

Crawford: Good. And they are considered to be a very good group, I think. They work hard, don't they?

Shenson: Yes. And you see, a lot of the musicians in the symphony act as coaches and work with them. Alistair Neale, who is outstanding, is very much involved. I now underwrite the eight "titled violin chairs."

Crawford: Well, let's move on then and talk about the Asian Youth Orchestra. You have told me a good bit about the Asian Youth Orchestra. That's been such a big part of your life these last years.

Shenson: Yes. It's just incredible how it has happened. Of course, it all started when a gentleman by the name of Richard Pontzious called me. Richard, as you may remember, was music critic for the San Francisco Examiner, and prior to that for many years he taught music in Japan and spoke the language. He taught music at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and learned the language there as well, and he was anxious to bring together Asian musicians, similar to Tanglewood. Many of the artists that he knew and worked with said that was a marvelous idea, so he tried to pursue it.

However, he was in need of money--that eternal problem that all organizations, music or otherwise, have. I had met him once or twice but really didn't know Richard, but he called and said that mutual friends had suggested he talk to Ben and myself because he knew that we had many good friends in Hong Kong. He told us what his thoughts were and that people like Yehudi Menuhin thought it would be a very good idea.

We had one friend whom we first met in 1961 in Hong Kong, Sally Aw Sian, a very interesting young woman, single, and interested in young people. Since Ben and I were going to Hong Kong, we contacted her. We showed Sally the brochure and told her that this was something we felt that she would be

interested in, and the bottom line is that yes, she was interested.

Crawford: What is her name?

Shenson: Sally Aw Sian. We met her, as I said, in 1961. So we had known her for quite some time when this first came up. So she said yes, she would help Richard in 1989. She gave him an apartment and office in Hong Kong and enough money to start the Asian Youth Orchestra.

So Sally is the "godmother" who really got the Asian Youth Orchestra started and has helped every year. Fortunately, every year except the year my brother was ill we always traveled with the Asian Youth Orchestra for one or two weeks.

A major problem occurred initially. 1990 was the first tour, even though it was scheduled and ready to go in 1989, the auditions had been completed, the itinerary was completed, the funding was completed--then the Beijing riots occurred, and the Chinese government would not permit any of the young Chinese musicians who had been selected to travel. I think at that time there were usually about 110 musicians, and at least twenty of them were from China. So that cancelled it.

Crawford: What age are they?

Shenson: In 1990, the first year, it was about 110 musicians, and the youngest was, I think, twelve years old--a violinist from Taiwan--and the eldest was twenty. This year I think the youngest was fourteen and the oldest about twenty-three. What Richard Pontzious does is to go to the eleven Pacific Rim countries in Asia and through music teachers and music schools he will audition in the fall and early spring.

This year he selected about 102 young musicians to be part of this year's orchestra, and he was invited to play for the changeover. We always refer to it as the "changeover" here in the United States; every time I read anything in the newspaper it's changeover, changeover, changeover. Over in the Orient it's "handover"; and a few people behind closed doors say "takeover." [laughter]

What he does is audition these young people and then brings them together at a camp for three weeks. The first two years the camp was in Kumamoto, the second two years in Singapore, the last three years in Hong Kong, and this year, for the first time, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He will bring these hundred-plus students together for three weeks and has maybe twelve or

sixteen coaches. Steve Tramontozzi who is our double bass player in the San Francisco Symphony, and his wife who is a violist will be coaches with the Asian Youth Orchestra this year. She presented him with triplets two years ago.

Besides San Francisco coaches come from Boston, New York, London, Brussels, and New Zealand. Each of the coaches work with their own group; the tympanists, the strings, etcetera for three weeks. Then the entire group comes together and then go on tour. Usually the tour is in the Orient. Now, mind you, the players are all Asian but are from different cultures and have different languages. English is the common language. One year after their concert in Hong Kong, Richard put them on an airplane and took them to Vienna, Austria! Quite a culture shock. But that's the only year they went to Europe so far.

Crawford: All of them?

Shenson: Yes. We met up with them in Germany and traveled with them for two weeks through Germany.

Crawford: Who arranges the travel?

Shenson: There is a young man in Hong Kong, Kevin Peterson, who has a travel business. He is personally dedicated to the Asian Youth Orchestra. He works very hard. It takes a whole year to plan ahead.

The year my brother was ill, they came to the United States. They played in the White House, they played Avery Fisher Hall, they played over at Cal Performances--we helped to underwrite that one--and they ended up at the Hollywood Bowl. I don't know how many thousands of people came to hear them. So those are the only two years out of the eight years that they actually left the Orient. Last year I joined them in Hong Kong and we went to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Hanoi, and Manila.

Crawford: Is Richard the conductor?

Shenson: No. He is a conductor, but he acts as the general director of the entire project. This is the fourth year that Sergio Commissiona, who is based in Vancouver now, has conducted. As I told you, Yehudi Menuhin was the first conductor and music director when we met in 1990 in Kumamoto, Japan.

It's the most marvelous opportunity for these young people. If you can imagine, from the moment they leave their front door until they return home there is no expense involved to the

family or to the young musicians, and they have an experience that will never be equalled.

Crawford: What percentage of them do you guess will become professional musicians?

Shenson: It's hard to say, but some of them are very good. A few of them are so good that some of the coaches will see that they get to music academies, particularly those on the East Coast. This year, as I might have mentioned already, Yo-Yo Ma is the soloist.

Crawford: You might talk about this.

Shenson: Yes. Yo-Yo Ma had indicated in recent years to Richard his interest in the Asian Youth Orchestra and said that he would be the soloist for half the tour this year. They're in Japan today. Tan Dun, a young Chinese composer and good friend of Yo-Yo Ma, had been commissioned by the Chinese government to compose a symphony that he called "Symphony 1997," specifically for the changeover. Tan Dun was born in 1957 in China.

Crawford: You had said how charming Yo-Yo was and how energetic. So let's talk about what he did at the AYO camp this year.

Shenson: I tell you that I should go to a dictionary, Caroline, and see if there are any more adjectives to find, because I run out of adjectives trying to describe Yo-Yo Ma. He's forty-two years old, he has two children, and his wife Jill traveled with us for two weeks. He left Seoul, Korea, the morning of July the seventeenth, after we traveled together for three weeks. He has energy you cannot believe, enthusiasm, camaraderie--he related to these young musicians so well, and was always smiling, always cheerful. And everywhere we went, when we were leaving the backstage, there are fans--he must have a fan club everywhere in the world.

Crawford: He's one of those shining lights that comes along.

Shenson: Oh, absolutely.

Crawford: It's a very costly operation, the AYO. For instance, Yo-Yo Ma: does he get his usual fee?

Shenson: He gets a very handsome fee, but still some of it is underwritten by various organizations.

Crawford: I read about the new symphony they did in Hong Kong, that the music was synchronized--the fireworks and the music.

Shenson: That's right.

Crawford: Imagine the rehearsal. All these youngsters must have been so excited.

Shenson: Yes--the hall where we played--the Great Hall in Beijing seats ten thousand people, but there was less than ten thousand the night the AYO played.

Crawford: So you had ongoing sponsors?

Shenson: Yes, the AYO couldn't exist without them.

Crawford: Does Yo-Yo Ma relax?

Shenson: Yes. Totally. He's always smiling. On one of the last nights in Seoul Yo-Yo gave an ice cream social for all of the musicians. And I tell you, there were tears in these youngsters' eyes when they played the last encore in Seoul because they knew that was the last night they would be with Yo-Yo Ma.

Crawford: What sort of families do they come from?

Shenson: Oh every kind. But Yo-Yo Ma just radiates happiness. He's always pleasant. He's never "on-camera." He's always just himself.

Crawford: And they will continue to function as they have before even though things have changed in China?

Shenson: The Asian Youth Orchestra? Oh yes.

Last year when I left Richard, I said, "What are you going to do next year in 1997?" He said, "I just don't know. Maybe we'll skip a year and just see what happens in Hong Kong." But he decided that they would try to do it this year because to skip a year would lose a certain momentum. Then the Chinese government invited them to play on July the first. So that's why everything was stepped up. Normally they don't start the AYO program until just about now because of school vacations.

Crawford: How do they travel? What level is their lodging and so on?

Shenson: Well, all the accommodations are the very best for the most part. In Hong Kong, because they were there quite a while, they stayed in a different hotel, but the faculty and staff were at the Hyatt Regency. I didn't join them until the last three days in Kumamoto, where they had their camp this year,

but they were in a new resort called The Mines Resort in Kuala Lumpur, and it had only opened in March of this year. The facilities were excellent and they served breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Everybody gained weight. There were practice rooms and everything necessary all within one facility which worked out extremely well.

Crawford: No expense spared.

Shenson: Fortunately, there are many people that sponsor the program, such as Daniel Ng, who is on the executive committee and a patron. Chase Manhattan Bank in Hong Kong is an important sponsor, and there are many major corporations in Japan that sponsor such as Fuji, Xerox, and Nikon Building Service. There are also many individuals.

V TRAVELING THE WORLD

[Interview 6: August 1, 1997]##

First Travels in the Orient: 1954

Crawford: During our session today we will look at the holiday letters you and your brother sent out each year to describe the highlights of the year, especially your many travels. So let us start in the middle fifties with the vacations you took separately.

Shenson: As I've mentioned to you, I joined my brother in the practice of internal medicine here in San Francisco in 1951. During those early years I could not plan any major holidays, but in 1954 I planned my first major vacation. Ben and I were well established. I think we were very well organized, and each of us felt we could take off for a period of perhaps thirty days, as long as the other one stayed home to mind the shop.

We enjoyed it, and we had a lot of outstanding contacts. No matter where we traveled, no matter what year it was, there were always contacts--either personal contacts or contacts where a friend or a patient had said, "If you're going there you must do this or that."

In 1954 I planned my first major vacation and that was to the Orient. I always had a great affinity, as you know, Caroline, for Oriental arts because of my father's involvement way back there in the twenties with I. Shainin and Company, and living in San Francisco I had exposure to the Chinese and the Japanese population, many of whom were friends of ours. So that was the first logical trip for me in '54, and I really put it together almost a year ahead of time.

As you know, we bought our present home in 1953 and then moved in in 1954, and I knew that I was taking this trip to the Orient before we moved into the house.

We had had a very lovely flat on Palm Avenue which was really sort of a home on one floor. It was very large and we had some nice oriental furniture. I said to Ben and our mother, "Let's wait until I come home from the Orient before we buy anything more for our new home, because I might do some shopping while I'm there." And of course, that was the understatement of the year. [laughter]

So that year was my first major trip, and I remember my first stop. Do you want me to go into all these little details?

Crawford: As much as you like.

Shenson: My first stop was Manila. Now mind you, this was 1954; it wasn't that many years after World War II had ended. And it just so happened that a patient of mine whose husband had been in the service was in Manila, and when she knew I was going there, she and her husband insisted that the first night I arrived they have me for dinner.

I'll never forget it. The greatest delight was the first course, which was a lettuce salad, but it looked really strange until she explained to me that you have to be very careful in the Orient with food, generally, if you're not used to it. They always soaked their lettuce in potassium permanganate. [laughter]

And then also in Manila there was a lady doctor that had gone through Stanford, and Ben had been one of her teachers, and she could not have been more gracious. She was there and took me shopping, and if you remember on the third floor of my home I have all the cane furniture. It all came from Manila.

Crawford: I think you showed me.

Shenson: Well, fortunately, another of my patient's husband was working on the President Cleveland and I worked out my travel to coordinate with that ship. She and her husband, for Christmas, had a very beautiful chest of drawers made for me. In fact, it's in the dining room here, because when we moved I put that in the dining room and I said, "When I get to Hong Kong I'm going to have two companion pieces made by the same manufacturer to match them." And that is part of our dining room set today.

But getting back to this ship, I planned my visit so that after I purchased the cane furniture, I made arrangements for this patient's husband to pick up the furniture when his ship came into Manila within a week or two after I had left.

Crawford: I was wondering about shipping. It couldn't have been that easy.

Shenson: No, but in this case everything was put on the President Cleveland.

Then from there I flew to Singapore. I knew a Dr. J.C. Geiger who was head of the Department of Public Health here in San Francisco. He was a very well-known man in his time and a very flamboyant man. We had known him and his wife professionally and personally for several years.

One of their sons was in Singapore with his wife and family, and when I arrived they were at the airport to meet me. And you know when you're traveling, having someone at the airplane to meet you is quite nice.

Crawford: Oh yes.

Shenson: I stayed at the Raffles Hotel, which is still there today, but it isn't at all the same.

Crawford: Why was it so special?

Shenson: Well, it was steeped in tradition. It had old-world charm.

Crawford: Wonderful service.

Shenson: Oh, incredible; absolutely incredible. I had a marvelous time there, thanks to the Geiger family.

Then from there I went to Bangkok. This was just after The King and I opened on Broadway with Yul Brenner and Gertrude Lawrence. The December before I went on my trip I was in New York with my mother and Mrs. Wores, and I had three tickets for The King and I, which was the hottest ticket on Broadway. I believe I told you that in those days, in the fifties and even in the sixties, the Broadway theater was just so outstanding that you didn't know which show to go to first. So more than once we went to a matinee and an evening show.

One day, I remember, I took them to Radio City Music Hall in the morning for the vaudeville show, then we went to a matinee, and then we went to an evening show. The night came

that we went to The King and I, and we sat down, and before the show started the usherette came along and said, "May I see your ticket stubs?" I showed them to her and she said, "These were for last night." This had never happened to me before, and believe me, Caroline, it's never happened since. [laughter]

Well, she was very nice. The management put up three chairs--I guess illegally from a fire marshall's standpoint--and our chairs were better than our original seats! They were just so kind, and the three of us enjoyed the show very much. And you know the stories about how tough people are in New York and not very courteous or friendly?

Crawford: I've never found it to be the case. New York and Paris seem to me to have the most outgoing and helpful people.

Shenson: That's right. Absolutely. But I mention this show because the costuming was the most incredibly beautiful anyone had ever seen. There was a man who is very well known now, Jim Thompson, and he was in World War II. Following that, he went back to Bangkok and started going to the little villages and having them weave some of the most brilliant, beautiful silks in different colors. All the costumes for The King and I on Broadway were from Jim Thompson.

So when I went to Bangkok, I went to Jim Thompson's and I bought a huge amount of silk. The gold drapes in the dining room are the originals from 1954, and pure silk doesn't usually hold up, but they're still good. The ones in my mother's bedroom are the same, the originals.

Crawford: What color?

Shenson: I'll show you. The ones upstairs are--what color would you call it? Not magenta. It's a muted color.

Crawford: They must be very heavily lined.

Shenson: Not too bad.

Crawford: Well, you just shopped and shopped.

Shenson: Oh, I certainly did! And then from Bangkok I went to Hong Kong and checked into the Peninsula Hotel, where I had a lovely room overlooking the Ferry Building there, and I remember the morning after I arrived I got up and started browsing around in the shops in the hotel and on Nathan Road and my head started spinning. Everything was just so gorgeous and so inexpensive, and I remember people saying, "Oh, you should have been here in

the good old days." As if 1954 wasn't the good old days!
[laughter] It's the first time I ever had to write home for
money. I spent everything.

Crawford: What else did you find?

Shenson: I bought a lot of furniture from Mr. J.L. George, who was a
very well-known teakwood furniture maker. Many of the
personnel on the various President Line ships would have all
their furniture made by him. He was the one who made the
original chests I spoke about.

You remember my speaking about my very good friend, Frank
McKelvy, who had been the set decorator for Paramount Studios
before he went into World War II and then afterwards worked
with Disney for many years? He had come over to the house here
when it was vacant and he drew a few sketches of things he
recommended that I have made and bring back from Hong Kong.

So I had a busy time, and Mr. J.L. George was very kind. I
remember he wanted me to have Peking duck for lunch and I think
that we must have gone to three restaurants before we found the
right one. The first one he wasn't satisfied with, the second
one wasn't just right, and the third one was all right.
[laughs]

I told him what I wanted, they made things up, and it
worked out just beautifully. And fortunately while I was in
Hong Kong, the President Cleveland arrived, I had a delightful
lunch with Ray and I gave my patient's husband a few more
parcels to put on the ship for me. My time in Hong Kong will
forever be remembered. It was just incredible.

Crawford: A first trip like that is usually memorable.

Shenson: Yes. Absolutely.

Then I flew to Japan. This is all the same year. [laughs]

Crawford: You took a whole month?

Shenson: This trip, I think, was almost five weeks, a little bit longer.

So I went to Japan and did the routine things and met some
very nice people. When we were living on Palm Avenue there was
a little bachelor apartment in the basement and the young man
who had that basement apartment was back in Japan. He had been
there during World War II and started a business, so when I got
to Tokyo, he was there to show me around, which was very nice.

Finally, reluctantly, I left the Orient and flew to Honolulu. Of course, I had been to Hawaii several times and had many good friends there--and I waited for the ship to arrive. Then, Caroline, I got on that ship with all my possessions, and when I came into the port of San Francisco on the ship, everything that I purchased on this trip was with me.

Crawford: That would never happen today.

Shenson: That's right. My mother was down there waiting for me, and I said, "Get your checkbook." I think I had fourteen crates.

Crawford: You could have filled up Gump's store.

Shenson: [laughter] Almost! Not quite. A very nice customs man said, "Uh-oh. I think I'd better go get an adding machine." But it wasn't as bad as I expected.

Crawford: But you did have to pay duty?

Shenson: On some, yes. But I was allowed x number of dollars duty free. I had receipts for everything, and it was a very modest tax. So that was my first trip to the Orient.

Trips to Europe, North Africa, Burma, India and Sri Lanka:
1956-1964

Crawford: Well, let's develop some themes here. I'm sure you don't want to go year by year, but there were places that you went almost annually, and other places you visited only once. I notice here that in 1956 you went to Italy, Switzerland, and France, and then that doesn't appear too many more times.

Shenson: After my 1954 trip I didn't do too much in 1955, but 1956 was my first trip to Europe, and I tried to cover as many cities as I could--so that was a quick, general glimpse of Europe.

Crawford: Again a month.

Shenson: Yes. It was a month. And there again it was totally different than the Orient. The Orient is just a world unto itself.

In those years it was so easy and pleasant to travel. There wasn't the congestion, the cost was very modest compared to today, and if someone got a gratuity of a paper dollar they were so pleased and service was outstanding. It was much more

gracious, of course, in those days to travel just generally, but at least that particular trip in 1956 gave me a feel for Europe. Then after that I sort of specialized in a certain area rather than trying to do too much in thirty days, knowing that I would be able to have these month-long trips yearly for a while. And we both did that for a period of fifteen years.

Crawford: You went so many different places; Tahiti, Fiji, North Africa, and Israel in 1960.

Shenson: Yes, and in 1959 I visited Italy, Greece, and Turkey. I think there was also a Greek Island cruise. That was the south of Europe and the following year was North Africa. I guess that was Tangiers and then down to Marrakech.

Crawford: Were these tours?

Shenson: Oh no. I just put them together. There was a very outstanding travel agency here called Lundy's. The woman who was in charge was a patient of ours--a very nice person--and she took a personal interest in planning our trips with us so that I had input but I could also rely upon her. She made the reservations.

I remember Marrakech. Here again, there was a young man that had come to San Francisco with a group who became quite ill and we hospitalized him in the old Stanford Hospital at Clay and Webster Streets. Fortunately, he recovered very nicely, and he was from Marrakech, and when I mentioned that I might be coming to Marrakech he made sure he was there at the train station waiting for me.

Crawford: Remarkable that you kept in touch with all these people, kept addresses.

Shenson: Well, it just so happened that circumstances were such that it worked out.

Crawford: And so he showed you Marrakech. You got to see quite a bit, and you did it in such a way that you saw most of the world--you went to Burma, India, Sri Lanka--Ceylon in 1964.

Shenson: If you'll notice, usually if I went to Burma or India, I would go by way of Hong Kong. If I went to Japan I would go by way of Hong Kong. When I went to Australia and New Zealand I went by way of Hong Kong. So I always tried to stop in Hong Kong.

Crawford: Why was it so important to you?

Shenson: Well, I just enjoyed myself there and had so many good friends, whom I still have. When I was there just three weeks ago they were all there to be kind and hospitable. It's just the ambiance, you might say. But my travels were similar; life didn't change much in the sixties and seventies.

Visiting Hawaii and Setting up the Wores Exhibit at the East West Center in Honolulu: 1970, 1971

Shenson: We had never been to South America and I said to Ben in around 1971 that we should go there. So I did put something together with the help of the travel people, but unfortunately I developed a kidney stone. I had had no previous complaints, no previous symptoms, and I passed it without any trouble, but I was in the hospital for a few days, and so at that point we said, "Well, now, going down to South America after an episode like this--maybe we should postpone the trip." So we did, and consequently never did get down to South America.

As a result of that, since my brother had already planned some time off I said, "Why don't you go over to Honolulu?" He said, "What'll I do? Just sit on the beach?"

I said, "Well, remember Theodore Wores spent a year in Honolulu in 1900 and went back on his honeymoon in 1910? Go down to the archives or see what you can find out about Theodore Wores." At that point we had no connection with anyone in Honolulu that would have known about Wores.

So he did. And of course as a result of that trip it opened up an entire vista. I think today the name of Theodore Wores is known by almost every person in Hawaii, primarily because of his most famous painting called "The Lei Maker" that we gave to the Honolulu Academy of Art as a gift ten years ago.

Also as a result of Ben's trip in 1970 he got to meet with a very prominent, very nice Chinese family. Mr. and Mrs. Edward Eu. Eddie and some people from Honolulu who were involved with the Merola Opera Program were here at a meeting of the regional group, and that is where I met Eddie, who actually was president of the Bank of Canton in San Francisco and was living at the Clay Jones Apartments. We became extremely good friends through music.

When Ben went over for his visit to Honolulu they had a dinner party and invited Thelma and Harry Zen. Unfortunately,

Thelma is not well now, but she was one catalyst that did everything possible relative to the work of Theodore Wores. The Shensons and the Zens have been very, very close friends ever since.

Crawford: And how did Ben come to make this connection initially?

Shenson: Eddie Eu had been in San Francisco and we went to a meeting relative to the Merola Opera Program. He was from Hawaii and he lived around the corner from here. I think Ben and my mother were away for the weekend and I invited him to come over for a drink. That's how it all started.

Crawford: That's a lifetime connection in Honolulu, with the Museum and the collections and so on.

Shenson: That's right. Then when Ben went down to the archives on that trip and asked if there was anything there about Theodore Wores he found a few things, and the woman who was there in the Archives said, "You know, that young man over there is very knowledgeable about early Honolulu and artists." Ben went over and introduced himself, and sure enough, David Forbes said, "Theodore Wores!" And he told him more about Wores and his time in Honolulu than we ever knew beforehand.

At this very nice dinner party I mentioned to you, Thelma said to Ben, "What are you doing in Honolulu? Just relaxing?" Ben said, "Yes, but I'm kind of researching a San Francisco artist who lived in Hawaii and I think painted here." I don't know if Thelma was on the board of the Honolulu Academy of Art at that time, but she was just the most energetic, effervescent, gracious, wonderful person I've ever known. I know that she was on the board of the Queen's Hospital, always doing for others. It was in 1971 that through Thelma's efforts there was an exhibition of the work of Wores that was done in Hawaii and Japan and the Pacific Islands at the East-West Center, which is on the grounds of the University of Hawaii.

Frances Allison, who I keep in touch with--she lives in Louisiana--had been a writer for one of the newspapers and knew a lot of the families in Honolulu. I guess she was working for the East-West Center at that time, so she took on the responsibility for this exhibition, as I mentioned. We, of course, loaned all of the paintings that fulfilled what we wanted (the Hawaiian period, basically), but Frances Allison went and found at least a dozen or more portraits in private homes that Theodore Wores had painted.

Crawford: I see that in 1971 there were five trips to Hawaii!

Shenson: Well, that was in preparation for this exhibition.

Crawford: You talked about San Francisco occasionally, and in one letter you said, "San Francisco is full of weirdos but we love it." [laughter]

Shenson: Oh, yes. Well, of course that was the Haight-Ashbury period when the drug scene was pretty bad. [laughter] In the earlier days Haight Street was a very elegant shopping area with all the beautiful shops and the Haight Theater, but by this time, 1971 it had been taken over by a different group of people, the Flower Children.

Crawford: What changes can you remember in the seventies and travel?

Shenson: It was really a continuation. We had our separate one-month vacation and we pretty well covered the globe.

Travels with Ben Shenson: 1984

Crawford: You began traveling with your brother in 1984; how did that affect the way you and your brother traveled?

Shenson: The pattern was pretty much the same. We got along: Ben always said, "We don't argue--we discuss." It enhanced our trips to share them. The very first trip that we took together, except for maybe Hawaii, was in 1984.

Crawford: Yes, the Christmas letter says: "'Eighty-four, first time together."

Shenson: For any long period, that's right. We were away for three weeks. We wanted to go to China. Before that it was difficult to go, and even then you didn't go by yourself. We didn't want to go with a group of people we knew, because sometimes that sort of ties you down, just staying with that little group. So there was a tour organized by the medical school at the University of Virginia, and we signed up for that. It turned out to be an excellent tour. We met some very nice people that we're still friendly with, but you're still a little bit independent too. That, of course, was sort of a routine type of tour, but we had just the most marvelous time.

And we came back to the office and it was still there! {laughter} The patients were still there. No one hardly missed us, we thought, but they were well taken care of. We had an office of four internists that took our calls. Our secretary--

Crawford: That was Mary.

Shenson: Yes, she was right there, and she would answer the phone and knew how to handle all the patients. She lived very close to our home here and was kind enough at night to stay in the house for security purposes and to take care of Miss Blackie Junior, III, at that time--our little black cat. So all the bases were covered. Someone was in the house, someone took care of the patients, and we came back and just picked up where we left off.

We had a marvelous time and it was then that we decided that we ought to do it more often, maybe not for three weeks, but we began taking two and three one-week vacations and sometimes a fourth one.

Crawford: And all those together, then?

Shenson: Yes, and always together.

Crawford: And Ben had been fifty years ago in China?

Shenson: Yes.

Crawford: So that was kind of an anniversary present.

Shenson: It was. Actually, three weeks ago when I was in Shanghai I took some of the faculty of the Asian Youth Orchestra to the new museum in Shanghai that just opened two years ago. It's a beautiful building, gorgeous installations.

Ben took me in 1984 to what is now the Peace Hotel, which originally was the Cathay House, right on the corner of Bund. We went in and it hadn't changed one bit--the dark mahogany, the staircase--so we had our pictures taken. That was fifty years later for Ben.

Then three weeks ago when I was there my friends went with me to the Cathay House and they took my picture on the same stairway.

Washington, D.C., New York, and a Birthday Party: 1985

Crawford: From here on, I've chosen some interesting highlights from the next years--please add anything that I've missed. One of the highlights the next year was a visit to the State Department Building in Washington, D.C. with Secretary Schultz.

Shenson: Yes, that's right. This was all through Clement Conger, who came at our invitation to San Francisco. On a weekend he gave four lectures at the de Young Museum, back to back. The first one was on the State Department and their rooms, and the other was on the White House. Then he repeated them the next day. He said it was a pretty heavy schedule and he wasn't going to be able to do that again. We also had a little dinner party for him here in our dining room. We felt we were safe letting him come into the house.

Crawford: You thought he might take some paintings off the wall.
[laughter]

Shenson: Well, nothing would really fit into the State Department because it's all Americana. But he was sitting at this end of the table and we had this cabinet of Oriental art at the other end of the room, and, by golly, during dinner he said to my mother and Ben: "You know, there's a very interesting porcelain piece there that would just be ideal in the State Department rooms." It just so happens that I still have it, because we were very fond of it, but we gave him two other pieces of porcelain. [laughter]

Crawford: With somebody like that, you know that that's his business, looking out for things.

Shenson: Yes. Because we had given to the State Department we were included in several affairs. In fact, the first one was when Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State. He had a reception in the State Department in the tremendous banquet room, and since my mother was always very partial towards Henry Kissinger in those early days, when the invitation came she surprised Ben and me and said, "You know, I would like to go to that." So we did.

During the reception Henry Kissinger came over, and my mother said that she was from San Francisco. Of course, being a diplomat, he said, "What a lovely city." And my mother said, "Next time you're in San Francisco give me a call and I'd be happy to see you again." Halfway through the dinner, Ben was circulating around--it was sort of a buffet type dinner--and he introduced himself to Henry Kissinger, who said, "Oh yes. I

talked to your mother earlier this evening and she invited me to San Francisco." [laughter]

Crawford: Typical politician!

Shenson: You asked about George Schultz. We went to a dinner when he was Secretary of State as well. In fact, I was with him twice last week here in San Francisco. Someone introduced me to him and I said, "Oh, I met George Schultz in the State Department. You might not remember, but my brother and I were with you one evening when there was a very long reception line. That evening you had a wristband on, and you told us that you get so tired of shaking hands that if you wear a wristband people won't shake hands too firmly." He said, "You remember that well. Now I don't use that anymore because now I have a way of shaking hands--I turn my hand a little bit and shake hands so people can't press too hard." Then a week ago Tuesday night there was a little surprise party for Charlotte Swig and George Schultz for their engagement at the Clift Hotel and I reminded George Schultz about our meeting here and in Washington, D.C.

Crawford: I imagine you'll go to the wedding then.

Shenson: No, I don't think so. As a matter of fact, I definitely will not, because that will be two years to the day that my brother passed away.

Crawford: You go out a lot, don't you?

Shenson: You know, yesterday was two weeks since I returned home and I've not been home one night for the last two weeks. [laughter] But this month is going to be much quieter.

Crawford: Since we are talking about highlights of 1985, you might talk a little bit about that very special birthday party back in 1985 with Licia Albanese.

Shenson: Was that in New York?

Crawford: Yes, in New York.

Shenson: Oh yes. It was my brother's birthday: November the first.

Crawford: Yes. You were in the Park Avenue apartment of someone named Tanenbaum.

##

Shenson: We were in New York City and always visited with our good friends, Charles and Mary Tanenbaum. Mary had graduated from Stanford in 1936, the same year that Ben did.

This particular year when they knew we were coming to New York at the end of October, 1985, and she remembered Ben's birthday was November the first Mary said, "Why don't we plan a little surprise birthday party for your brother in our apartment?" I said, "That would be awfully nice, and we'll let him think that you don't remember it's his birthday."

Crawford: Did you celebrate birthdays? Were you big birthday celebrants?

Shenson: Well, I more so than Ben. [laughs] I was the organizer of birthdays as a rule.

So before we went to New York and before I made any specific dates, the Tanenbaums phoned and said, "We know you're coming." They would always have us over to their apartment for dinner with some friends, and they just casually said, "Are you free for dinner November the first? We're having a little party." I said, "That's fine with me. Ben, is that all right?" He said, "Sure. They wouldn't know it's my birthday?" I said, "No, probably not."

When we got to New York we were due at their apartment at six o'clock for cocktails, but at five o'clock a friend who knew about the party but didn't say anything about it came by the hotel just for a visit because he knew that we were going to be going home in a few days. We were just having a pleasant visit, and then he said, "Well, I guess I'd better be on my way. See you soon again, I hope." My brother was getting a little anxious that we leave because he knew we had a date and he always liked to be on time.

So we went downstairs, and it was six o'clock on a Friday night, a busy night in Manhattan, and there were no taxis and it was almost too far to walk, so we finally got on the bus going out Madison Avenue. We arrived at the Tanenbaum apartment and went upstairs to their vestibule.

Before Ben thought about it the doors to their study and living room opened and about thirty of our friends were there, singing "Happy Birthday." Lucine Amara and Licia Albanese were leading the group. It was just marvelous, wonderful. People still talk about it because it was a surprise for some of these people who hadn't seen each other for a while. It was a sit-down dinner, just a beautiful, beautiful party. It really was a real surprise. Ben knew there would be a few people, but

little did he realize that it was going to be such a big party --for him!

The Shanghai Conservatory: 1986

Crawford: Good. Then in 1986, the next year, you made your first connections with the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Is that right?

Shenson: 1986. Yes. I'm glad you remembered that. Richard Pontzius, the founder of the Asian Youth Orchestra, had contacted us that year, and it was that year that we went over and talked to Sally about the Asian Youth Orchestra. When he knew that we were going to Hong Kong, he said, "Would you like to go over and stay at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music?" because in those days it was still difficult to get an individual visa for China. Since we were going to go and be guests at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music we had no problem getting our visas.

Crawford: Oh, I see. If it was a formalized visit it was easier.

Shenson: Yes, so we stayed there four or five days and had a marvelous, marvelous time.

Crawford: At the conservatory?

Shenson: Yes. In the early days Shanghai was divided into the French Quarter, the English Quarter, and the Russian Quarter. The present Shanghai Conservatory of Music is in the French Quarter. I think the building we stayed in had been the Belgian Embassy at one time, and off the record, I will tell you that everything was so run down in those days. You walked around you could see that beautiful architectural homes had been there, but it had all been taken over by the government, and badly run down. Many, many people were living in a small area. The Belgian Embassy was not the cleanest. But it was a marvelous experience to stay there.

Crawford: I think you mentioned during those years Mr. Kurt Herbert Adler visited the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

Shenson: Yes, Kurt and Nancy Adler went to China and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, which has always enjoyed a very good reputation. When he came back he was very impressed and felt it would be very nice if the Merola Opera Program would invite a singer from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music to participate in the Merola Opera Program.

I don't remember what the young man's Chinese name was, but he was nicknamed George, and it worked out very well. As I told you, when my brother and I went on that memorable visit in eighty-three, we saw George and his wife in Shanghai. Those were the early days when things were not as liberal as they are today.

Crawford: Not as liberal, that's right. Did you get the feeling you were monitored?

Shenson: No, not really, but there were not many smiling faces walking on the streets in those days and of course their clothes were very drab. Today, because of the miniskirts and the coiffures and the bright colored blouses you could be anywhere in the world. China has changed drastically. Free enterprise is everywhere, and it's expensive.

Crawford: Why did they westernize so quickly?

Shenson: I think that communism has ceased to the degree that it has and therefore the changes. Of course you know it was '89 when the riots in Beijing occurred, and at that time everything was still very, very controlled. I was in Shanghai three years ago, and every year you can see such a change, but more so this year than ever before. Of course the building--Caroline, you have no idea. What used to be just flatlands and off in the country are now cities. Have you ever heard of Wuhan?

Crawford: No.

Shenson: I hadn't heard of Wuhan. We went there three weeks ago, and I think they said the population is five million in this little community. There are blocks and blocks of very large apartment buildings--sometimes as many as fifty buildings in one area.

Crawford: Just in the middle of nowhere?

Shenson: And then in another section, another fifty. The building is incredible. The major problem that they're having is pollution. And in all major cities today, the pollution is very bad because of automobiles, factories, buildings and construction. They have to do something about it.

Honored by Merola; A Temple Emanu-El Endowment; Thoughts About Giving: 1991

Crawford: In 1991 you established an endowment for Temple Emanu-El, and you were an honoree of the Merola Program. That was special.

Shenson: 1991, oh yes. That was a very beautiful affair. Every year the Merola Opera Program has its annual gala, which is the major fundraiser, and my brother and I were flattered in 1991 to be the honored guests. It was at the Mark Hopkins Hotel, a sit-down dinner, and a number of young artists that we had sponsored performed. And our special friend Mary Costa flew out to join us. Even today, Mary is the most outgoing, gracious, beautiful, lovely woman. In fact, I invited her to come out on September fifth for the re-opening of the Opera House.

Crawford: Will she come?

Shenson: She was so excited and said absolutely she would, but Disney Studios has been re-releasing a lot of their animated movies, and one of them is going to be Sleeping Beauty, and she's the voice. Disney Studios is sending a crew to Knoxville, Tennessee, where Mary lives, to do some interviews relative to pre-publicity of the release, and she cannot come. But I think I mentioned that I did invite Licia Albanese and Lucine Amara. The two of them will come.

Crawford: Mary Costa had a kind of a special relationship with your family, didn't she?

Shenson: Yes, that's right.

Crawford: Is she teaching?

Shenson: No, but I know that she does some judging and master classes.

##

Crawford: You mentioned music at Temple Emanu-El in your Christmas letter of 1991. Did you help with a commission?

Shenson: We established the Doctors Ben and A. Jess Shenson Music Endowment Fund, and gave substantial funds for the Skinner Organ at Temple Emanu-El, which is considered one of the finest of its kind. It was in a state of needed repair. The Fund is

for the maintenance and improvement of the Skinner Organ and for musical events.

I am going to do something again in memory of my brother because, as you know, last February--a year ago February there was the most outstanding musical memorial for him. So many of our friends from all over the country came, and if you've ever been in Temple Emanu-El you know that the main sanctuary is very large and it was almost totally filled.

Crawford: What was the nature of the tribute?

Shenson: It was in memory of my brother, because when he passed away only my cousin, her husband, my aunt, and I attended the funeral service. I felt that it was time to do something special to help memorialize my brother. Cantor Barak put together a beautiful two-hour musical program. Friends of ours who are members of the San Francisco Symphony played, Stephen Tramontozzi and William Bennett. Several came from New York such as Ann Panagulias.

Crawford: She sang?

Shenson: Yes. And Ellen Kerrigan, who I've mentioned before--she and her husband performed. It was a beautiful program, and I have it on tape. Then there was a very nice reception downstairs after the performance.

Crawford: So that's an ongoing fund?

Shenson: Yes.

Crawford: And really for the preservation of the Skinner Organ and other musical events?

Shenson: Yes.

Crawford: I was very interested that you had dealings with Alan Greenspan.

Shenson: My brother was invited to join the Art Advisory Committee of the Federal Reserve Board when Alan Greenspan was Director. We had given them a Theodore Wores painting for their collection. Then when my brother passed away they asked me to serve, so I serve on that committee. [laughs]

Crawford: You have so many board obligations that it sort of takes care of your travel year, doesn't it?

Shenson: Yes, that's right.

Crawford: Isn't there something coming up in Hawaii, as well?

Shenson: Well, I'm going over there for five days to the Honolulu Academy of Arts because I want to do something in a very meaningful way as a contribution. They will eventually get some of our art work--some of the Chinese things we have upstairs--eventually, but in the meantime I want to plan ahead. I enjoy doing this, not being morbid at all, but just to know where things are going to end up, and if there are some extra funds, to give them now. My father had an expression, "To give when you're dead is like lead; to give when you're alive is like gold."

Honored by the Hebrew Union College, 1992; Art Tours and a "Weak" in Provence, 1994

Crawford: I think that makes a lot of sense. You've done a lot of giving. Well, in the next year, 1992, you were honored by the Hebrew Union College.

Shenson: Yes.

Crawford: Do you want to talk about that association?

Shenson: The Hebrew Union College's Western Headquarters is in Los Angeles. The group here in San Francisco is a support group. They usually have a black-tie, sit-down dinner at Masa's, and they always want to honor someone in the community. They were kind enough to honor my brother and myself and established a scholarship in our honor.

As I've mentioned before, Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Holladay, the founders of the National Museum for Women in the Arts, had for several years invited us to join them and eight other people for an art tour. The first one was to Switzerland, which was the most incredible tour we've ever taken. The Ambassador and his wife from Switzerland to the United States were good friends of the Holladays and were very interested in the Museum. When they were transferred back to Switzerland, they told Billie Holladay that she and her husband Wally should come over some time because they would like to take them on an art tour of private homes. Well, it turned out that they put together such an art tour and invited us to join them and we

did. It was absolutely incredible because there are so many homes in Switzerland that have the most outstanding paintings, mostly of the French Impressionists, because these families and their families knew many of the French Impressionists. If these artists came for dinner, they would bring a painting as a little gift. To be in somebody's living room, having cocktails, and see a Matisse, a Renoir and similar French Impressionist paintings was really very special!

Crawford: What happens to those collections? Will they go to museums?

Shenson: I think that the families will see to that, but of course many will remain in these families for future generations. For several years after that we went on similar tours. The first one, as I said, was Switzerland, the next year was London and then Brussels and then Scotland in 1993.

In 1994 my brother was anxious to go to the south of France, to Provence, with the same group and a similar art tour was planned. One couple could not go, and another couple had to cancel. So one thing led to another, and they cancelled that particular trip. But Ben said, "Well, let's do it ourselves, because I would like to go and spend some time in Provence." We have a very good friend, Alain Piallat, who was then the general manager of the Mariott Hotel here in San Francisco, and his wife Jacquey, and Alain said his father, who lived in Provence, had just retired and he'd bought a new car, and would be happy to drive us around.

So when we arrived in Nice there was Alain's father, plus Alain and Jacquey! What happened is that every two years Jacquey and some of her former college sorority sisters rent a large home and they all come together--maybe two or three couples plus other friends--and this year they were in Provence and had rented a villa.

It was wonderful to be with this group, but Ben, myself, and Alain's father had our own itinerary. I guess it was three or four nights after we were arrived that I woke up in the middle of the night and I didn't feel good. Obviously something was wrong. That day we were supposed to go and be with the group for a Sunday brunch, but I ended up in the hospital. The diagnosis was acute pancreatitis. I was in the hospital for five days in Provence.

Crawford: What promoted that?

Shenson: I still do not know.

Crawford: Could it have been rich food or something?

Shenson: Possibly, although Ben and I ate the same. But I was in the hospital for five days with nothing to eat or drink except intravenous fluids, and being in Provence--[laughter]

Crawford: Oh, painful.

Shenson: While I was in the hospital Ben stayed with the group. Fortunately I was released from the hospital and flew home on schedule. Last year, Alain and Jacquey rented a villa in Lucca and invited me to go and be with them, which I did. Some of the same people that had been together two years before were there, and I'd known them, because some come to visit in San Francisco last year. It was a wonderful reunion. After Lucca, Alain and Jacquey took me back to Provence to show me what I missed while I was hospitalized two years before.

Crawford: That's lovely. So how is the care in France?

Shenson: Very satisfactory. There wasn't too much to do. I just needed complete bed rest and nothing to eat or drink. They did the proper tests. Everything was repeated when I got home, and everything was back to normal.

Crawford: You hear that's a very good medical system.

Shenson: Yes.

Crawford: I think you wrote a little story called "My WEAK in Provence."

Shenson: Oh, [laughter] yes.

Crawford: The holiday letters are charming. Who wrote them?

Shenson: It was a combination. Ben usually did, and then we would work together. I think the last few years I did. It was fifty-fifty.

Crawford: You always said at the beginning, "Oh, here's another form holiday letter. We apologize." But, of course, everybody looked forward to them, didn't they?

Shenson: The year that Ben passed away, of course, I didn't do anything like that because I had over a thousand condolences--telephone calls, telegrams, faxes, letters, memorial contributions--all of which were individually acknowledged. There was no time to write a holiday letter.

Crawford: No, you probably weren't in the spirit, either.

Shenson: No, that is right.

Honored by the CHS: 1994

Crawford: Well, the California Historical Society in 1994 honored you and your brother.

Shenson: Yes, that's right. This year it's going to be George Christopher, our former mayor. Yes. They have this event every year.

Crawford: Are you close to him?

Shenson: I know him quite well but I don't really see him too often now. He lives in the same apartment building as my cousin. His wife, Tula, was a very good friend of my mother's. They were very fond of each other, until she passed away quite some time ago. We were shocked. George is quite remarkable and will soon be ninety years old.

Crawford: You mentioned Irma's husband started the San Francisco Film Festival. Were you active?

Shenson: No, but we were always invited. I'll never forget the night we went to see the preview of The Graduate. Do you remember the movie The Graduate?

Crawford: Oh, yes.

Shenson: I'd never heard of Dustin Hoffman before, although he'd been in the entertainment world. After the opening of the film at the Alexandria theater, there was a reception and we met Dustin Hoffman.

It must have been in mid-December because that is when I would take my mother and Mrs. Wores to New York (between Christmas and New Year's).

A few days after we arrived in New York, we were in I. Miller shoe store on 57th and Fifth Avenue since Mrs. Wores was looking for some shoes. I was sitting there and saw this young fellow on the phone. At first I thought he was a stock boy but then I said to my mother, "That looks like the fellow we saw the other night at the movie in San Francisco." So when he

hung up from the telephone, I went over to see him. I said, "You know, I just came in from San Francisco. Were you in San Francisco last week for a movie called The Graduate?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Are you Dustin Hoffman?" He said [sounding pleased], "Yes." He said, "My girlfriend is over there looking for some shoes. The picture is going to be opening here tonight." [laughs]

Crawford: The film festival wasn't a big part of your life ever?

Shenson: No. It was just because of our cousin, Bud Levin, founded the International Film Festival and was kind enough to always included us at the openings.

The Last Holiday Letter--1996

Crawford: Now we've come to 1996--the year that you had a dinner for Diana and Yehudi Menuhin, your seventy-fifth birthday, other travels. You said you planned to stay home and then you were going to check into the Metropolitan Club in New York City. Do you stay at this club?

Shenson: My brother and I usually stayed at the Pierre Hotel. George Schwab was the general manager and we had known him for many years. He was always very kind to us and we had marvelous accommodations. So we would usually stay at the Pierre. Once or twice we did stay at the Metropolitan Club, which is next door. It's a beautiful, private club, and it was through a very good friend, Delton Harrison, who lives in Shreveport, Louisiana, that we were sponsored and stayed there.

When I went back to New York after my brother passed away, it just didn't seem right to be at the Pierre by myself so I stayed last year at the Metropolitan Club again.

Crawford: You mentioned that your work was important to you after your brother's death--"keeping busy is the best medicine."

Shenson: Yes.

Looking Back on a Charmed Life

[Interview 7: January 9, 1998]##

Crawford: We are recording in your office today and I want to ask some general questions. I'll start by asking what person did you most admire in your life?

Shenson: My brother, no question.

Crawford: Are there things you wish you had done or done differently?

Shenson: No--I've had a charmed life. I've done what I wanted to do, and I've never had to do anything I didn't want to do. There is nothing I would change.

Crawford: It is a good answer, and I think we could make that a title for your oral history: "A Charmed Life; A Hundred Years in Medicine." [laughter]

Shenson: Yes, it is a hundred combined years since we got our M.D.s and were in practice together over forty-four years.

Crawford: I'm looking at portraits of two important people in your life--your mother and your brother--and I wonder if in your experience this kind of family closeness is as rare as I think it is?

Shenson: I think so. I should also mention my father, whose photograph is right there on my desk. Unfortunately, he passed away in 1950, but he was part of our family closeness.

Crawford: When you lost your mother, how did you come to terms with her death?

Shenson: We were very busy with the practice of medicine; very, very active, and we just carried on. We were still living at home, doing the best we could. The fact that we had each other still helped bridge the gap. And our outside interests, being on all the boards, and the Wores activities--each of these could be a full-time job.

Crawford: Wores was certainly a big figure in your life.

Shenson: Our experiences relative to Wores was a major part of our lives--bringing this man's work back to life--going to dinner at the White House and going to Washington, D.C., having visitation rights to several of the major museums where his

paintings are now on exhibit and knowing that, I would say, all major museums throughout the country have a Wores in their collection. And this enhanced Ben's and my interest in Honolulu--the Hawaii collection, among others.

Crawford: Can you think of times when the pieces on the chess board might have been moved differently? When you might have said, "I don't want to be a doctor--I'd like to be a tenor." [laughter]

Shenson: No.

Crawford: It was always assumed both of you would be professionals?

Shenson: When Ben was an infant and saw my mother tip the garbageman, he said he wanted to be a garbageman and at one time he wanted to be a train operator.

Crawford: The things that go with childhood. Who first gave you the idea that anything is possible? Certainly your life reflects that phrase.

Shenson: As I just mentioned, our father died so early, at sixty, so I think it was our mother during all the formative years going through medical school and so on--without making it obvious but impressing upon me that anything I wanted to do was possible. It wasn't just one person, but she would certainly have been the dominant one.

Crawford: What were the major obstacles, major triumphs?

Shenson: I'm sure there were many that I don't recall now, but, and this may be far afield, the resurrection of the art of Wores, the work of Theodore Wores, and the tour of his work I put together for about twenty museums. This took a lot of work and a lot of time and many museums were not interested--the doors were closed--but it didn't bother me. That door was closed, but another door opened. So that could be an obstacle.

And the triumphs? Getting into medical school; staying in medical school; getting an M.D.; keeping in practice now forty-seven years; having dinner at the White House. There has been so much, and that's why I say I've led a charmed life. If anything didn't work out, I felt that it was meant to be, and something else would come along, and it did.

Crawford: Fine answer. Thank you.

Transcribers: Lisa Vasquez, Caroline Sears

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TAPE GUIDE--Dr. A. Jess Shenson

Interview 1: May 16, 1997	
Tape 1, Side A	1
Tape 1, Side B	12
Tape 2, Side A	24
Tape 2, Side B	26
Interview 2: May 30, 1997	
Tape 3, Side A	28
Tape 3, Side B	33
Tape 4, Side A	42
Insert from Tape 5, Side A [6/6/97]	44
Resume Tape 4, Side A	50
Insert from Tape 11, Side B [8/1/97]	54
Resume Tape 4, Side A	54
Insert from Tape 5, Side B [6/6/97]	56
Resume Tape 4, Side A	57
Tape 4, Side B	57
Interview 3: June 6, 1997	
Tape 5, Side A	59
Tape 5, Side B	61
Tape 6, Side A	67
Tape 6, Side B	78
Interview 4: June 13, 1997	
Tape 7, Side A	93
Tape 7, Side B	95
Interview 5: July 25, 1997	
Tape 8, Side A	101
Tape 8, Side B	109
Tape 9, Side A	116
Tape 9, Side B	122
Interview 6: August 1, 1997	
Tape 10, Side A	132
Tape 10, Side B	140
Tape 11, Side A	144
Tape 11, Side B	148
Interview 7: January 9, 1998	
Tape 12, Side A	155
Tape 12, Side B not recorded	

APPENDIX

A	The Shenson family holiday letters: 1970 to 1997	158
B	"The Widow's Remarkable Gallery," <i>San Francisco Examiner</i> , November 12, 1967	188
C	"The Shensons Resurrect an Artist," <i>Stanford M.D.</i> , Summer/Fall, 1971	193
D	Distinguished Service Award of the Stanford Medical Alumni Association, presented to Dr. Jess Shenson on April 23, 1994	196
E	Remarks made by Dr. Albert Shumate and Dr. William Gerdts at a California Historical Society luncheon honoring Ben and Jess Shenson, November 1, 1994	197
F	Remarks entitled "The Doctors Shenson: Doing a Good Job Is Its Own Reward," April, 1995, in connection with the Shenson Award to honor outstanding St. Francis Hospital employees	205
G	Letter to Dr. Jess Shenson from President Clinton regarding the presentation of "Iris Garden, Hori-Kiri, Tokyo" to the Emperor and Empress of Japan, December 26, 1995	209
H	Invitation to and remarks by Rabbi Stephen S. Pearce at a memorial concert for Dr. Ben Shenson, Sunday, December 14, 1997	210
I	Participants of the Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund, the Merola Opera Program, 1977-1997; Shenson Young Artists, sponsored through San Francisco Performances, San Francisco Symphony and CAL Performances, 1987-1997	213
J	"Theodore Wores; Paintings from California to Japan," by Dr. William Gerdts, 1998	214
K	St. Francis Hospital's photographic portrait of the Drs. Shenson, April 1995	218

The Shenson family holiday
letters: 1970 to 1997.

1970

This year draws to a close and it truly has gone by so rapidly. I am embarrassed to admit that I seem to be slower in doing things---or maybe it is that I have more things to do! We are all drowning daily in a sea of paper-work and, unfortunately, Medicine is overwhelmed with new rules, regulations and detail that we were formally spared. But all of this must make you believe we are depressed, pessimistic and blue! Such is not the case. We simply view it as part of the changing order and the silent revolution the world seems to be experiencing.

There are three parts to TRAVEL---ANTICIPATION and Planning, PARTICIPATION and REFLECTION with its many memories. For fifteen years Brother Jess and I have annually spent our yearly holiday outside the United States and this year, for the first time, we decided to forego this pleasure. No, the economic crisis did not influence us! It just so happened that we did not really wish to leave our busy Practice alone for each other to wear himself out and the whole world seemed so busy, unsettled and unhappy. And travel today is really not as easy and gracious as it formally was. So that took care of ANTICIPATION and PARTICIPATION. It did leave us, however, REFLECTION.

We actually reflect so many times during the year---I should say years---of our many marvelous adventures and friends. There is the Orient---and we do hope that our good friend, Mrs. Arthur Woo (we call Mae "Mrs. Hong Kong") is recovering from her illness and is surrounded by her delightful family including Vivian and Henry Li. We speak so often of Hon Chu and Charity Fung, C.Y.Pao and Annie, Sally Aw, her mother and Irene, our fabulous Chow brothers and their families and so many others who have been so marvelous to us. We have not seen Mr. Su-hara in Hokkaido for some time now but we could never forget such a real gentleman and his charming family. We often recall our African safari and immediately talk about Stanley and Bea Tollman of Johannesburg and the Behrmans of Capetown. We wish the Tollman Towers all the success its owners deserve and already look forward to staying there some day! The sunny shores of Greece hold many fond memories, thanks to Maria and Panos Pitsinos who must come to San Francisco some day! Whenever I enjoy avocadoes I always think of Inge Lise and Lars Helwig-Larsen in Copenhagen. Paris affords us many memories, the thoughtfulness of the Gosssets being one of the happiest. London always makes us feel at home, thanks to such nice people as Joyce Stone and the Buchanans. So you see we have lots to memories of the years gone by.

Actually, we did move about a little this year. I was in Philadelphia and New York this past Spring and among others I had a nice reunion with Gwen and Charles McGolrick. In the Summer I got over to Honolulu and Maui so had a chance, after a long absence, to visit Margie and Fred Evanson, Marguerite and Eddie Kwock and Eleanor and Bill Jamieson. We both enjoyed the hospitality of Peggy and Edward Eu and we are happy to add the names of Harry and Thelma Zen among our Island friends. Jess went East for a few weeks to be with his traveling friends, Steve Silverman and Richard Lienhard and was their guest at their Summer home at Hampton Bay. He also managed a brief Hawaiian adventure later on!!

Our Mother continues in good health and is kept busy high on the hill taking care of us, the gardens, and Miss. Blackie of Washington Street, the spoiled feline of Nob Hill. Mr. Goldie, of whom we have spoken these past ten years with such affection, has finally gone to Cat Heaven.

So now you know what has been going on with the Brothers Shenson this past year. We are so fortunate to have seen and done so much and hope that we can continue to see all of you in the coming years. In the meantime, Happy Holidays and may 1971 be filled with lots of good Health, Happiness, and Prosperity for each and every one of you!!!

1971 has been another year for the Brothers Shenson to stay pretty close to home ground. We actually traveled a good deal in mileage, but not in territory. Jess and Ben each made four trips to Honolulu and the unique thing is that we were together on all four journeys. 1971 was truly the year of the Hawaiian Adventure.

This summer we were honored by the State Senate of Hawaii for "contributing to the culture of Hawaii" after lending 56 of our Wores' paintings to a six week Exhibit in Honolulu. The Wores Exhibit was presented at the impressive East-West Center, an 11 year old cultural center located on the University of Hawaii campus and operated by the U.S. State Department.

In February we flew over to Honolulu to finalize arrangements for the Exhibit, departing on a Friday night after office hours and returning Sunday night. Then we flew over at the end of March, along with Mother and our good friend Carrie Wores for the official opening which was a most exciting and memorable occasion. All of the old Island families were represented, and the ovation was heart-warming. This Exhibit was received so enthusiastically and we made so many new friends that we will remember it for years to come. Ben returned the same weekend, but Jess stayed on with Mother and Carrie Wores. The brothers returned in early May to close the Exhibit. This stay only lasted for the weekend for Jess, but it was Ben's turn to remain the rest of the week. Now we are "kamaainas".

In early August Ben flew up to Calgary on a Canadian Adventure where he had a most interesting week. Mr. Wores had painted his famous "Hunting Grounds of the Past" there in 1913, and we had hoped to find a happy home for this painting in Calgary, but the Gods ruled otherwise. A San Francisco Foundation, hearing that the Canadian Riveredge Foundation was trying to purchase the painting, came forth and outbid them and now will present the painting as a gift to the Saint Francis Memorial Hospital where it will hang permanently in a prominent area.

San Francisco continues to have its increasing quota of "weirdo's" but what big city does not---although I believe that we outdo the others!! Jess continues to make our gardens more and more beautiful and Ben's "orchard" had a fair crop of fruit this year. Mother continues to be busier than ever with all of her many activities and appears younger every year. Miss Blackie of Washington Street, our feline mistress, is as independent as ever, but has truly become part of the family.

All in all we have had a very happy, healthy, and interesting 1971. We hope that 1972 will be equally the same and trust that you, our good friends, will have a very HAPPY, HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS, AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR!

Ben
Jess

H I G H L I G H T S O F ' 7 2

Except for the always busy Practice of Medicine, the New Year got off to a relatively quiet start for the Brothers Shenson. January didn't see too many extra-curricular activities, but FEBRUARY saw both Ben and Jess off to Honolulu for a week, climaxed by the "Narcissus Ball" celebrating the forthcoming Chinese New Year. Then in APRIL Ben flew to Washington, D.C., on Art business, and then went on to Atlantic City for a Medical Meeting. From his meeting he went on to New York City, where he was joined by Jess, and both of them took care of some more Art business. Then, on April 22, both Ben and Jess attended the fabulous BING GALA at the Metropolitan Opera from 8 o'clock p.m. until 1:30 the next morning. Just imagine—40 of the world's leading artists in one night!!!

MAY saw both Ben and Jess in Washington, D.C., as the guests of President and Mrs. Nixon on the occasion of the re-opening of the Blue Room. After the reception and dinner, we paid a visit to the West Wing of the White House, where three Wores paintings now hang permanently. Words fail us to describe the exhilaration we experienced that memorable evening.

Our faithful and loyal Miss Blackie, II, who came to us in 1961, departed for Cat Heaven in mid-April, but May 17 saw the arrival of Miss Blackie, Junior, III !!!!

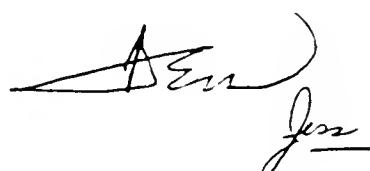
This year, as last year, we each took several short vacations during the Summer. In JUNE Jess was off to Florida and Disney World for a week as the guest of a long-time friend, Frank McKelvy, of the Disney Studios. JULY saw Ben spending a week at home working in his orchard, while Jess was off to Quadalajara and Puerto Vallarta for a week. In AUGUST Ben and Mother drove down to Disneyland (Frank was our host, again), and then on to Santa Barbara and San Simeon.

During late AUGUST and early SEPTEMBER both Ben and Jess flew over to the Islands, and had a delightful time with so many of our friends there from A to Z, including the Allisons, Coreys, Eus, Evansons, Jamiesons, Montgomerys, Naipos and Zens.

On SEPTEMBER 15 the 50th Season of our San Francisco Opera started, and continued through November 21. We never missed a week!!!

Now you know why we don't have time to leave the country and take any extensive trips to foreign lands! Our professional obligations, personal interests, increasing involvement in the field of Art and the hectic pace of world travel have kept us close to home these past three years. Our new kitten keeps Mother busy and happy, we're glad to report, and she is still the head of this house!! Mother looks very well, and a more gracious hostess you'll never meet.

We are looking forward now to a very HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON and a GREAT 1973—and wish you the same!!!!



The image shows two handwritten signatures. The top signature, 'Ben', is written in a cursive script with a large, stylized 'B'. Below it, the bottom signature, 'Jess', is also in a cursive script.

The time has come to summarize some of our activities this past year of 1973 which really has rolled by all too quickly. Another year has gone by wherein we did not leave the USA. In the early part of the year we were quite busy in preparing for our good friend, Clement Conger, Curator of the White House and State Department, to be the Speaker at four sessions here at the DeYoung Museum. Then in May we all went back to New York City for the opening of the month-long retrospective Wores Exhibition at the famed Kennedy Galleries. We are terribly pleased that the Exhibition was so well received and that each year brings more deserved recognition of this great artist. Our brief New York stay afforded us also the pleasure of a brief but spirited reunion with many of our good friends. On June 23rd we celebrated our Mother's eightieth birthday with a Reception at home for one hundred and seventy-five of her friends. Many more, unfortunately, were not able to attend this Gala Event that transformed 1266 Washington Street into a truly Island Wonderland of tropical flowers, exotic refreshments and authentic Hawaiian music. Our Mother still has not quite recovered from that party. The end of June there was a week of rest for Ben and our good Mother in Santa Barbara and Jess was rewarded in July with a week with Mother on the Monterey Peninsula. The major safari for the Shenson brothers was our visit to the Island Paradise of Hawaii which has practically become our second home these past three years thanks to our many, many friends who extend such warm hospitality. The relatively close proximity, gorgeous weather and a complete escape from the telephone and everyday responsibilities which are always present in San Francisco make us want to return more often. We just hope that we do not wear out our welcome!!! Then before you knew it the Opera Season was on hand and every Tuesday night found us there faithfully enjoying it with our many friends.

We missed seeing so many of our old friends in the far corners of the world --- though they are not so far away now with our jets. We hear all of the experiences of our fellow travellers as they return --- confusion, congestion, inflation, etc. so we are happy to have all of our pleasant memories of travel when things seemed so much more gracious. Still, there is that underlying wanderlust that we both have so one of these days we hope to resume our travels and meet up with all of you.

In the meantime, we both send all of you our very warmest wishes for a very happy Holiday Season and a very healthy 1974 in which our Mother joins us, as well as Miss Blackie, Jr. III of Washington Street.

Ben
Jess

1974

We have always hesitated to include with our Holiday Wishes a memorandum of our activities, but in these busy times it seems the only practical way to keep in touch with our close friends in the four corners of the earth. We think of all of you so often and our memories are so filled with happiness and warm thoughts of our having been together.

Our most important non-medical activity---the bringing-back-to-life of Theodore Wores and his paintings---took us from Washington, D.C. to Honolulu this year. We were privileged to have dinner with Dr. and Mrs. Henry Kissinger on the occasion of the opening of the Thomas Jefferson Room which is part of the Diplomatic State Reception Rooms in the State Department Building on October 4th. It was an evening which our Mother particularly enjoyed as she is quite an admirer of the Secretary.*

Jess has been very active the last couple of years with the San Francisco Metropolitan Opera Auditions. As a result, he helped host a reception at the Clift Hotel following the February Finals which was a huge success. In October he was co-chairman of the Central Opera Service Conference which met in San Francisco for the first time. Participants from all over the United States and Canada attended and all were unanimous in their praise for the excellent meeting and superb Receptions. Some of the members that attended our reception at home said that they will never forget it.

After a long absence from one of our favorite cities, Hong Kong, the Pearl of the Orient, we each returned independently in April. It was marvelous and exciting being re-united with so many of our old and good friends.

Our only real vacation together---and now we are making it an annual one!--- found us back at the Halekulani Hotel in Honolulu in late August and early September. A bonus trip took us back again November 15th for a gala Reception featuring Theodore Wores' Hawaiian Child and The Poi Bowl, a lovely painting which graces the Holiday Issue of Honolulu Magazine this year.

Now that you have heard the good news, here is the bad news. On May 29th Jess slipped in front of our home and fractured his left wrist which meant a cast for two months and a cancellation of many things planned. Then on July 28th Ben woke up with a very Virulent Virus (the first time he ever missed a day at the office!) and spent ten days at home in bed catching up on his reading. The rest of the bad news you read about every day---Inflation, Unemployment, maybe even a War.

But let us forget all about that and just remember to be thankful for all of our blessings and really have a very HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON!!!

*Ben and
Jess*

1975

December 1975 found The Lei Maker the COVER GIRL for the American Medical Association's first Clinical Session ever to be held in Hawaii--a memorable event for both parties involved. But let us start with January 1975 which found Ben back in Hong Kong for an all too brief ten days there, followed closely by Jess in February. As usual all of our many good friends in Hong Kong lavished us with such gracious hospitality that we are afraid that we may outwear our welcome. In spite of the many changes of this fascinating city, our friends do not change and that is why we enjoy returning so often. Jess' Chinese New Year's Eve with the Chow Family in their home was one of the high points of his visit. One of Ben's many memorable evenings was attending the opening of the Eong Kong Arts Festival Ball with the Aw Boon Haw family.

In March Mother and Jess were in Los Angeles for the Regional Metropolitan Opera Auditions while Ben remained at home cat-sitting with Miss Blackie Jr. III, the latter now celebrating her third anniversary with us. It was Jess' birthday while he was in Los Angeles and the birthday cake served by Alice Colombe and Lorraine Saunders will long be remembered by all of those who enjoyed it.

Each year seems to rush by more quickly than the previous one, our many non-medical interests, in addition to a busy professional life, undoubtedly accounting for this. The resurrection of Theodore Wores continues almost daily. The Lei Maker appeared on the cover of The Journal of the American Medical Association in July and the Hawaiian Child and the Poi Bowl brought letters of acclaim from many physicians who found it on the cover of the November issue. We even received a letter from a Boston doctor telling us that he has a Wores that was painted in Japan in 1883 (lucky fellow!).

Jess and Ben returned to Honolulu's Halekulani Hotel for their annual August holiday and had a bonus return visit to Hawaii unexpectedly for the Medical Meetings the end of November. Again on both visits we were treated like Alii (royalty) by all of our Island "family". We, of course, consider the Halekulani Hotel one of our homes away from home and our many Honolulu friends part of our family.

In October Mother and Jess returned to New York City for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Meeting with which Jess is involved most actively and where Mother had a marvelous time every minute, thanks to the thoughtfulness and graciousness of so many of our good friends.

November 1st, All Saints' Day, was another milestone for Ben and his birthday cake served by Andre Jouanjas at Alexis was fit for a king. We only wish that all of you could have joined us on this joyous occasion.

MEDICINE, MUSIC, ART, TRAVEL - a marvelous combination for the good life we three enjoyed throughout 1975. Most important of all, however, are all the wonderful friends that we enjoyed being with and who played such a vital part whether it was in Hong Kong, Honolulu, New York or here in San Francisco. May 1976 find us visiting with all of you again! In the meantime, the three Shensons send you warmest best wishes for Health, Happiness, and Prosperity throughout the coming New Year.



HOLIDAY GREETINGS, 1976

Another year draws to a close and they do go by faster! We formerly never thought too kindly of persons sending yearly summaries with their Greetings, but we would not enjoy sending just a card and so take a great deal of pleasure "communicating" with each of our good friends - many of whom we have not seen for a long while but whom we think of frequently and who are still an integral part of our living. This 1976 was greatly saddened by the loss of our long and dear friend - no, really a part of our family - Carrie Wores. Her death at an advanced age was not unexpected and we were relieved that she went quietly and peacefully to sleep in her own bed. Still we actually feel a great void in our life which only time will remove.

The Oakland Museum featured Theodore Wores, The Japanese Years, a two month exhibition of thirty-nine paintings our noted American artist did nearly one hundred years ago in Japan and we are pleased the Exhibition was so well received. It will be travelling for the next two years under the auspices of the Western Association of Art Museums. The American Art Review had a feature article on Wores in their September-October issue which has sparked more interest in this accomplished painter.

Jess became more involved in helping young singers and now in addition to his Merola Board activities he is very busy with the Metropolitan Opera National Council of which he is on the Executive Board as a member-at-large. He attended the New York Meeting this past November, taking our good Mother along with him. They also went to Meetings earlier in the year in Los Angeles. (Ben stayed home with Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street!!!)

Our other travels took us back to the Orient and Malaysia in the Spring and a memorable time we did have. We will not make you envious with all the details of our stay in that exciting and different part of the world. While that trip was made independently, we did have our annual combined Hawaiian Holiday at the Halekulani! A week is a short time, but you can be sure that thanks to our many good friends in that Island Paradise we made the most of every minute!

And we did manage to keep up with our very busy Practice of Medicine also!!

We hope you are in the midst of a joyous and festive Holiday Season and that 1977 will bring us together again. Our Mother Joins us in sending you warmest and best wishes and the hope that the New Year will be filled with lots of good Health, Happiness and Prosperity for you and yours.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS 1976

We welcome the Holiday Season and send greetings to our friends. Even though you do not hear from us as often as we would like you should realize that we both speak of you during the year on many occasions at which time we relive our memorable visits to the Orient and once more experience the pleasant feelings we had when we were with you this past year. Hong Kong has become practically a second home for us. This year we did not want to wear our welcome out and fulfilled an ambition to revisit Malaysia. Here, thanks to the gracious hospitality of some new friends we had the pleasure of unforgettable experiences. Now when we read anything about Palm Oil we immediately think of the Lam Soon Company and our many friends in that organization. It was quite an experience for both of us to sit in the lobby of Raffles Hotel after so many years (Ben was there in 1934 and Jess was there in 1954) and Ben slept in the E & O Hotel in Penang after an absence of some forty-two years!

The rest of this year has found us busy with our Medical Practice, though we did find time for a week in Honolulu which has now become our annual joint Holiday. Otherwise we devoted ourselves to music and the pursuit of resurrecting the late reknown American artist, Theodore Wores. Jess' interests and activities as member-at-large of the Metropolitan Opera National Council took him to New York for a week in November at which time our Mother accompanied him. Ben remained home and besides all of his busy chores, took care of Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street who is the fourth member of our family.

Happy Holidays to you and may the New Year be filled with lots of good Health and Happiness!

We hesitate to write this Annual Holiday Letter --- but how else can we keep in contact with so many of our nice friends!! We have not seen many of you this year but we do want you to know that we think of you all often.

1977 has been a busy and happy one for the three Shensons and we hope that it has been the same for you. The Practice of Medicine continues to consume most of our time but fortunately we have time also for other interests.

The resurrection of the art of Wores continues and 1977 saw three of his paintings magnificently reproduced on the covers of the Journal of the American Medical Association, each being accompanied by an excellent cover story. This publication has a circulation of over one-quarter million copies not only in the United States but also the four corners of the world. The October issue of MD magazine had an outstandingly well written six page article on the life of Wores with one full page color and eight black and white reproductions. In addition to its circulation throughout the United States and Canada MD magazine has five separate printings throughout Latin America and the JAMA is printed separately in Spain and Mexico so you can appreciate how pleased we have been with this wide circulation and exposure of the Wores art. In Honolulu our very good friend and noted artist, Jean Charlot, designed a new magnificent and most powerful sixty-five pound frame for The Lei Maker which Alan Wilkinson hand crafted using Hawaiian Koa and Mango woods. Now the painting, always outstanding, has taken on a whole new dimension and soon will be returning to Honolulu. We had brought the painting home for conservation consultation and care before fitting her into the new frame. Hawaiian Child and the Poi Bowl will also be getting a new frame designed by Jean Charlot this year. Starting next month, January 1978, under the auspices of the Western Association of Art Museums, Theodore Wores. The Japanese Years will start travelling and it is anticipated that it will be on tour to museums throughout the country during the next two years.

Jess' involvement with the Metropolitan Opera National Council --- he is on the Executive Committee --- took him and our Mother to New York in March and November and in early March they also went down to Los Angeles for the Regional Audition Finals. We are pleased at how much Mother enjoys these trips and she too has become a member of the National Council. Jess also attended the Central Opera Service Meeting in Houston and then went on to La Jolla for the Western Regional Directors Meeting. Since he was doing a lot of travelling, Ben decided to do a little himself. Having not been back to London for several years, he spent two delightful weeks in this most exciting and "civilized" City attending the Rothschild Mentmore Auctions and visiting with old friends. We both missed our annual visit to Hong Kong but we were happy that some of our friends from there visited us --- we wish more would. We did have our yearly Hawaiian Holiday and again all of our good friends in Honolulu completely spoiled us so that we are looking forward to returning at the end of next August.

We do hope that all of you will be having a very Healthy and Happy Holiday Season and that the New Year will be filled with all your wishes and desires. The three Shensons --- and Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street --- send you warmest and very best wishes.



Without any doubt the most important event in the lives of the three Shensons during this year of 1978 was the fabulous Birthday Celebration --- the 85th --- of our good Mother. Several of her closest friends decided that they would like to give her a surprise dinner party and that they did in grand fashion. The French Club was the locale of the gathering unfortunately limited to only sixty people. It was a night that none present will ever forget. Delicious food and drink were surpassed only by the spirit of love and friendship that permeated the atmosphere of the whole evening. Two days later 175 friends stopped by our home to toast the Birthday Girl.

As for travel, Theodore Wores surpassed us all. Via covers on the Journal of the American Medical Association he managed to once more see the world, but in particular, due to special editions in their own language, he stayed longer in Mexico, Columbia, Venezuela and Spain. Theodore Wores, The Japanese Years, travelling under the auspices of the Western Association of Art Museums, spent time in Santa Clara, San Diego and Palm Springs at their respective museums and right now is in the Sun City-Phoenix Art Museum. A most outstanding exhibition of other Wores paintings were on view in the Richard L. Nelson Gallery of the University of California Davis campus in November and December. An excellent essay catalogue prepared by Dr. Joseph A. Baird, Jr., was published in connection with this showing.

This year saw Wores paintings become part of the permanent collection of many museums including the Theodore Lyman Wright Art Center of Beloit, Wisc., Monterey Peninsula of Art, New Britain Museum of American Art, Newark Museum, Portland Art Museum, Dayton Art Institute, Addison Gallery of American Art, Amon Carter Museum, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Jess' activities with the Metropolitan Opera National Council took both Mother and he to Los Angeles in March, twice to New York, once in April and once in early November and also down to Fresno in September. We are happy to announce that the San Francisco District Auditions in January were a huge success and plans are now under way in preparation for next Season's auditions.

Of course Ben and Jess did manage to get their annual Hawaiian Holiday in during the last week of August. We are so spoiled by our many Island friends and we are becoming increasingly concerned about wearing out our welcome. We were happy, however, to invite them to Washington Place on August 31st where Governor Ariyoshi officially welcomed back The Lei Maker to the State of Hawaii in the lovely new Jean Charlot designed frame of Hawaiian Mango and Hawaiian Koa and hand-crafted by Alan Wilkinson. The painting is now on loan to the Hawaiian State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

1978 has been an interesting and very varied year and we hope as happy a one for you as for us. The three Shensons and Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street sincerely hope that 1979 will be a year filled with good Health, Happiness and Prosperity for you and yours and a year that will bring us together again.

ben
Jess

HOLIDAY GREETINGS, 1979.

It is difficult to realize that we have been sending you these Holiday Letters for the past many years! We must confess that it is really the "easy way" to keep in touch with many of you whom we think of so often during the year and yet have had no contact with for sometime or perhaps contact but not enough during 1979. In Medicine we see so many individuals but something that makes us aware of how fortunate we are to have so many friends both near and far. We do have full and rich lives for which we are most thankful but we do also experience losses from time to time and this year we lost two of our very good friends whom we will miss sorely. We shall never forget Robert Chow who was such a good friend, nor can anyone ever take the place of Edgar Bissinger whom we relied upon over these many years for his sage counsel and wisdom. Both of these men enriched our lives and we shall have good memories of both of them.

Jess attended the Metropolitan Opera National Council meetings in New York during January and again at the end of March, completing his three years on the Executive Committee. The San Francisco District Metropolitan Opera Auditions under his Chairmanship did outstandingly well this past January and now he and the Committee are busy planning for the January 1980 Auditions.

We have also been quite busy with Theodore Wores and February found Mother accompanying Ben to the California State University in Chico where Theodore Wores, The Japanese Years was on exhibit and well received. At the end of May, both Ben and Jess flew over to Honolulu for the opening of this same exhibition at the Bishop Museum where it remained on view through October. It was a source of great pleasure to all of us to see how extremely well received the exhibition was and to note the tremendous news media coverage it received. Western Airlines and Hawaiian Airlines both had feature articles extolling the fabulous collection so it is fair to say that the name of Theodore Wores travelled more miles in 1979 than ever before!! Besides two covers on the Journal of the American Medical Association, Theodore Wores' paintings appeared also on the covers of the issues printed in Central America, Mexico and Venezuela.

The Opera Season has come and gone and we are delighted to say that our good Mother had one hundred percent attendance this year as always. It was just a year ago November that she became quite ill but she has done tremendously well and we are indeed very proud of her recovery. June 22nd was another birthday celebration for her but a quieter one compared to the 85th.

As we are writing this note for you, Ben is about to go off to New York City for a brief stay at which time he will be keeping up with Medicine by attending a very important Cardiology Seminar. It really is still Medicine, Art and Music for the Shensons with Medicine always number One. Actually, if it weren't for Medicine we might not have so many of you marvellous friends.

No communication to all of you would be complete if we did not mention Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street! We are happy to report that all goes well with our feline mistress who is Mother's faithful companion and who now joins us in sending all of you our very warmest wishes that you all enjoy a very Festive and Joyous Holiday Season along with a very Healthy, Happy, Prosperous and Peaceful New Year.

Ben J

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Although there really was not anything sensational in 1980 to write about we felt that since we have not been out of the country now for several years and have not seen some of our very good friends as often as we would like to, we should at least tell you what has been happening in the life of the three Shensons and Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street, our feline mistress.

January marked Jess' seventh and last year as Chairman of the San Francisco District Metropolitan Opera Auditions and at the Final Auditions he announced that he was now stepping aside but as we all know, he is still continuing to be very active in the organization and has been named Honorary Chairman. Jess spent a week in Boston at a Medical Seminar in March following which he went on to New York to attend the Spring Meeting of the Metropolitan Opera National Council and the Auditions Finals. On his way home he stopped at the Huntsville Museum of Art in Alabama to see the Theodore Wores retrospective exhibition, a collection of nearly one hundred paintings which were beautifully displayed.

Mother celebrated her 87th birthday in June at which time some 150 of our friends paid their respects at an Open House. Everyone continues to marvel not only at her physical well-being and graciousness but also at her memory. Would that they could say the same for her two sons. She enjoys driving around the State so Ben took her up to Lake Tahoe in March where she had very bad luck at the slot machines but then the two of them went down to Los Angeles and Hollywood to take in the museums where they had a marvellous reunion with some of their old friends. Mother and Jess had been to the Western Regional Audition Finals in Los Angeles in March and in August took off for a few days in Carmel.

During a very busy Opera and Symphony Season (the latter in our new Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall), we managed to help Ben celebrate his 65th Birthday --- so he is now a card-carrying member of the Senior Order!

This year we really missed our annual visit to Hawaii where we have so many marvellous friends but at least we have had the pleasure of entertaining some of them when they have been over here on the Mainland.

All through 1980 Theodore Wores' paintings have been doing a great deal of travelling. One of the more important exhibitions was the retrospective one at the Huntsville Museum of Art. This was particularly well received and as a result of their exposure in that part of the world there has been a tremendous demand now for further Wores exhibitions. At the present time, The Lei Maker and Hawaiian Child and the Poi Bowl are visiting some of the more prestigious museums here in the United States as part of Hawai'i: The Royal Isles exhibition. The Spanish Mill has returned home after travelling throughout the United States with the American Impressionists, a very important exhibition.

Medicine, Art and Music continue to be the three major areas of our activities. We are really always at a loss for sufficient time to do all the things that we want to do, but maybe that is the way that it should be. We are convinced that if we gave up the Practice of Medicine we would not be living life to its fullest and would actually have feelings of guilt about quitting too early. We adhere to the old slogan, "we are going to have to wear out rather than rust out".

Our warmest wishes to all of you for a very Joyous and Happy Holiday Season and a Healthy, Happy, Prosperous, Successful New Year in which we hope our paths will cross. Needless to say, Mother and Miss Blackie Jr. III join in these wishes.

Sincerely,

HOLIDAY GREETINGS 1981

Hopefully none of you have been ill this year but if you had been hospitalized in St. Francis Memorial Hospital here in San Francisco you would have received this menu. Rather than mark your "Breakfast", "Lunch" and "Dinner" we thought this menu cover could be used for our Holiday Letter and at the same time show you the unusual coverage given the Theodore Wores Collection.

This year has been a busy and interesting one for the three Shensons. In January Jess was honored by Dr. Paul Romberg at the San Francisco State University, receiving the President's Distinguished Service Award. He was in New York for two weeks in March to attend a post-graduate course in Medicine at St. Vincent's Hospital and then the Metropolitan Opera National Council Spring Meeting. This was just after his 60th birthday at which eighty of his friends joined in a surprise celebration.

This summer was rather low-keyed but busy since many of our good friends from North, South, East and West visited us here. We had a quiet family celebration of our Mother's birthday in June. She is really doing very well although gets a bit upset when she cannot do the things that she used to do!! But we hasten to remind her that she has earned her stripes!

The Fall has been busy with the Opera and Symphony Seasons. Last

month Ben was invited by Paul Volcker, head of the Federal Reserve Board, to attend a ceremony acknowledging a Theodore Wores painting, Ancient Moorish Mill, Alcala, Spain 1903 which we gave to the Fine Arts Program of the Federal Reserve System. While in Washington he was able to "check-up" on other Wores paintings including The Chinese Fishmonger which hangs on permanent exhibit in the Lincoln Gallery of the National Museum of American Art (formerly National Collection of Fine Arts). The National Trust for Historic Preservation has a portrait of Mrs. Truxton Beale and the three paintings that have been hanging in the White House since 1972 all seemed quite content.

In October Jess was appointed to the President's Advisory Board of San Francisco State University. This eleven member Board advises the President on matters concerning the University's involvement with the community. November saw the return of Theodore Wores' two most famous Hawaiian paintings to San Francisco. The Lei Maker and Hawaiian Child and the Poi Bowl are presently part of the Bishop Museum's exhibition Hawai'i: The Royal Isles at the California Academy of Sciences.

We just returned from the Tucson Museum of Art where the Theodore Wores retrospective exhibition opened. Mr. R. Andrew Maass, Director, and his staff could not have presented the exhibition more beautifully

and we are indebted to them for starting this travelling exhibition in such a grand style. During 1982 and 1983 it will be seen in fifteen museums throughout the country.

1981 also had a sadness for us. The loss of our very good and devote friend, Harry Zen, grieved us greatly but his memory will always live in our minds and hearts. His passing is a tragic loss to his family and the Hawaiian Community but we hope that time will help heal the wound left by his death.

As this year draws to a close you can be sure that we will be thinking of you and hope that during the coming year our paths will cross again. The past few years has seen us pretty much at home. To be sure we miss seeing our many friends on their home ground - London, Hong Kong and all those exciting cities - but we console ourselves by believing we travelled in the "good old days". You can be sure that our Mother joins us in extending to each and every one of you the hope that you will have a most Joyous Holiday Season and that the New Yea of 1982 will be filled with nothing but the very best of Health, Happiness and Prosperity. Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street, our faithful feline friend, also joins us in these wishes.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!


December 15, 1981

1982 has been a busy year for the three Shensons but even a busier one for the Theodore Wores Travelling Exhibition which has been viewed by over 20,000 people at six museums this year.

R. Andrew Maass, Director of the Tucson Museum of Art, and his staff put the exhibition off to a most enthusiastic start. When Jess visited the Oklahoma Art Center Director Lowell Adams and his wife were most hospitable as were Dr. and Mrs. Jack Metcalf who hosted a lovely cocktail party and then the following day Jess was given the grand tour of Oklahoma City by Doris Gunn. The exhibition looked very handsome in the Oklahoma Art Center and we were pleased to receive excellent newspaper and television coverage.

True Southern Hospitality was extended to Jess when he flew to Shreveport, Louisiana for their opening. Thanks to O. Delton Harrison Jr. and many of our Metropolitan Opera National Council friends he was literally wined and dined. Again the Wores exhibition received critical acclaim while it was at the Meadows Museum of Art. The Wores paintings and in particular the documentary film completed by Ira Latour and Valene Smith of the California State University, Chico, were enthusiastically received when Ben attended the opening at the Louisiana Arts and Science Center, Riverside Museum in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Ben's trip to Louisiana afforded him an opportunity to have a reunion with Frances and Donn Allison whom he had not seen since they left Honolulu several years ago. Frances' daughter, Mrs. Doyle Suarez, hosted a reception following the opening of the exhibition. The Cummer Gallery of Art in Jacksonville, Florida is truly a jewel of a museum and it was certainly a lovely setting for the Wores paintings. Director Robert Schlageter had somewhat limited space so concentrated on the Japanese Period but did include a cross section of the other ninety-two paintings.

On November 6th a chartered bus took many of our friends in New York to the Museum of Art, Science and Industry in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to see the paintings. Several others joined the group at the Museum. Before lunch the

Wores documentary film was shown since we now have two copies ~~so that one~~ will remain with the exhibition as it continues to travel. The entire first floor of the Bridgeport Museum was devoted to the Wores paintings and memorabilia. The final museum to show the Wores collection this year will be the Greater Lafayette Museum of the Art in Lafayette, Indiana. Their opening will be after you receive this letter but we know that Sharon A. Theobald, Director, will have a most outstanding installation.

In September 180 of our friends here in San Francisco attended a preview of the Wores documentary film which will be shown on KQED (Channel 9) in the Spring. Hopefully, one way or another, you will have an opportunity to see this outstanding production, three years in the making.

Did you know that the work of Theodore Wores is once again being seen internationally? In April the Japanese edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association had Thomas Moran's House, East Hampton on its cover and the same painting graced the cover of the September German edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association. Each time Dr. M. Therese Southgate's cover story was translated into the respective language. Even more exciting was seeing Buddha's Flowers: Lotus on the cover of the Peoples Republic of China edition for October!

This year neither of us left the USA so we certainly enjoyed visits from many of our friends who came from Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, Denmark, England, South Africa and from many of the States including, of course, Hawaii.

We are happy to tell you that our Mother continues to do extremely well. Although she has been an arm chair observer relative to the travelling Wores Exhibition she enjoyed reading all the excellent newspaper and magazine coverage and was happy to see the photographs that were taken. It has been a particularly busy Fall/Winter for her what with both the Opera and the Symphony and, of course, Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street who continues to demand a lot of attention, gets it but is worth it. Again, Happy Holidays!

1984 has been another very active year for us with Medicine keeping us busier than ever although we have managed to pursue and enjoy our many extra-curricular activities.

In January the Rose Shenson Pavilion was dedicated at the Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara. A lovely Reception was held and many of our friends from around the Bay Area attended as well as the full Board and supporters of the Museum. We appreciated the action of the Board of Directors and Staff in helping to perpetuate our dear Mother's memory.

We started out in February with a Cardiology Seminar in Hawaii at which time we also tried to make up for an absence of four years! And that we did, thanks to all of our Island friends who could not have been more hospitable.

Theodore Wores kept us busy with our attending opening receptions for the retrospective exhibition at:

Museum of Art, Washington State University, Washington. (March)
 Sierra Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, Nevada. (May)
 Haggin Museum, Stockton, California. (July)
 Monterey Peninsula Museum of Art, Monterey, California. (September)
 Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, California. (November)

Being in Hawaii in February had prevented us from attending the Cheney Cowles Memorial Museum opening in Spokane, Washington. The Theodore Wores documentary film continued to receive awards in 1984. It was Finalist at the American Film Festival and received the Bronze Plaque at the 32nd Annual Columbus (Ohio) International Film Festival.

This Summer the Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund had its first recipient, Rachel Rosales. Following her ten weeks participation in the Merola Opera Training Program she was selected to continue into Western Opera Theater and we hope that this heralds a great career for her.

In June we enjoyed an unexpected escape from San Francisco when Carol and Pat Ford invited us to their lovely home in Rancho Santa Fe. While there we attended Verdi's I Masnadieri with Joan Sutherland.

October found us in Mainland China! Marvellous weather and a good group (none of whom we had known beforehand) made Canton, Hangshou, Shanghai, Xian and Beijing fabulous and memorable. Shanghai's Bund looked exactly as it did 50 years earlier when Ben, as a youth, sailed into that harbor on the President Monroe. Local friends made our evenings most enjoyable. Our final five days in Hong Kong were like being in fairyland thanks to our many friends there. We never cease to be amazed at this Colony with its tremendous growth and accomplishments --- the tunnel to Aberdeen and the subway from Hong Kong island to Kowloon, let alone the new skyscrapers!

As Chairman of the President's Advisory Board of the San Francisco State University Jess has taken on new responsibilities in addition to being Executive Vice-President of the Merola Opera Program this year. When you receive this letter, Ben will be in New York attending "Cardiovascular Disease: Pathways of Progress".

1984's Medicine, Art, Music and Travel have been so good to us and we appreciate them as we appreciate and value the friendship of all of you to whom we extend best wishes for a Happy and Joyous Holiday Season and a great 1985 in which our feline mistress, Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street, joins us!

Ben *Don*

HOLIDAY GREETINGS - 1985

dear Tony,

After our outstanding trip to China last year we decided that we would be taking more trips together since, in the past, one of us usually remained at home to "mind the shop". Rather than being away too long any one time this year we took four one week vacations.

Our first trip was to Washington, D.C. in March primarily to attend the Advisory Board Meeting of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. It was a busy interesting time and the weather could not have been more beautiful. We were fortunate in being invited to attend the opening of the newly refurbished Benjamin Franklin Dining Room in the State Department Building and the Secretary of State's recently remodelled offices. Clement Conger and Secretary of State George Schultz were hosts that evening and we had a delightful visit with both men.

May 18th found us in Honolulu for the opening of our Theodore Wores Japanese paintings at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. A very festive reception was hosted by our good friends, Peggy Eu and Thelma Zen. For one week we certainly enjoyed the Island hospitality of our many friends.

In September it was time to go back to Hawaii but this time to the Island of Hawaii to attend a Cardiology Seminar. Ben had never been on the Big Island before so when not in class (six hours a day!) we toured the Island.

October 26th we flew to New York for one week. The highlight of that week was the surprise birthday celebration for Ben on November 1st. Can you imagine

opening the door of the Tanenbaum's Park Avenue apartment and being greeted by Lucine Amara and Licia Albinese singing "Happy Birthday" with a "chorus" of forty of our friends?!

Two additional major events this year occurred right here in San Francisco. On January 29th the California Historical Society hosted the 20th showing of the travelling Theodore Wores exhibition that first opened at the Tucson Museum of Art in December 1981. Pamela Seager and her staff had a most outstanding installation and the show could not have been more enthusiastically received. A commemorative wine was bottled to honor Wores and the exhibition. The other important San Francisco event occurred on November 7th when Marcel van Aelst, General Manager of the Hotel Mark Hopkins, hosted a superb dinner party in recognition of our forty years of medical help to the Hotel.

In between all of the above activities we continued our busy Practice of Medicine and although we try to slow down a bit we seem to be busier than ever. And we do not plan to retire --- as yet!

Yes, Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street is still in residence and makes sure that we return each evening after our office hours, unless we are out of town. Already we are planning some very interesting events for 1986 but for now may we take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you Health, Happiness and Prosperity during the Holiday and throughout all of the coming New Year.

Boris and Jess

1986 has been one of our most exciting and rewarding years. February marked the inauguration of the Shenson Visiting Professorship in Clinical Medicine at Stanford University and we were honored and pleased to have Dr. Proctor Harvey of Washington, D.C. as our first Visiting Professor. He certainly enjoyed his month, as did his good wife Irma and we cannot begin to tell you how well received he was by the students, residents, fellows and faculty who recognised him as one of the leading practitioners of Clinical Medicine to-day.

March found us in London where the sun was shining the Saturday we arrived and was shining the following Saturday when we left. During the week we spent every night attending the theater, opera or ballet. During the day we had a marvellous time just walking the streets, seeing the sights and visiting the museums. We returned in time to celebrate Jess' birthday at which time he was really surprised when over a hundred of his good friends from the fields of Medicine, Music and Art all convened to wish him well.

We really should say that 1986 was The Year of Japan since we had our first major showing of the Wores paintings in Tokyo in early May. Preceding our arriving there we did spend five days in our favorite city, Hong Kong, and visited with many of our good and loyal friends who always make our stay seem so terribly short. We could go on and tell you about our reception in Tokyo by the Asahi Shimbun but since brevity is the charm of eloquence we will refrain from doing so. Needless to say our exhibition at the Tokyu Art Gallery was exceedingly well received. Jean Ariyoshi, the wife of the Governor of Hawaii and Ruth Ono who helped organize the showing assisted us with the ribbon cutting ceremonies. Over 3,000 people a day came to see the paintings and we had tremendous news coverage including a segment on CNN Television. When we got back on the airplane to return home we practically had tears in our eyes since we were so touched by the sincerity and helpfulness of the Asahi Shimbun people who took care of every little detail and who were so appreciative of the Theodore Wores paintings.

Our good friends, the John Patrick Fords, saw to it that we had a delightful time with them at their Rancho Santa Fe home for a prolonged week-end in June and the Alexander Saundersons provided us with a most enjoyable week-end with them in Santa Barbara in July.

August found us on our way back to Japan to attend the final opening of our Theodore Wores exhibition at the Takashimaya Art Gallery in Yokohama. Again the Asahi Shimbun people met us at the airport and saw to it that we were treated just as royally on our second visit as we had been on our first one. We now feel that we have established a life-long friendship with Isami Tateishi, Shin-ichi Fujita, Mayumi Ono and all of the other members of that great institution.

September our Opera and Symphony Seasons started and since we have been devoted followers for many years the three months of September, October and November found us getting a great deal of culture! On October 23rd we were in Honolulu where we gave our most prized painting, The Lei Maker, to the Honolulu Academy of Arts which hosted a very beautiful, memorable and touching ceremony. We only wished that they had taped the beautiful dedication given by Reverend William Kaaina of the Kawaiahao Church. We took advantage of our stay in the Island paradise to visit with our many good friends.

Miss Blackie Jr: III of Washington Street has become quite social when ever anyone comes by the house and she doesn't hesitate to join us now in wishing all of you our very warmest and kindest personal regards and best wishes for a Happy Holiday Season and a great 1987. By all means keep us posted on what is going on in your lives.

Ben and Jess

Here it is December 1987 already and we can only hope and trust that you do not find these annual communications too boring or repetitive! It is about the most practical way of doing something that we like to do and that is to keep in touch with many of our friends, some of whom we did not see this year.

In March we had the pleasure of spending one week in the Big Apple during which time the paintings of Theodore Wores enjoyed a marvellous exposure at the Wunderlich Galleries. This visit afforded us the opportunity to be with so many of our good friends in that community.

April found us in Washington, D.C. at the renovated Willard Hotel which was so nicely located near the National Museum for Women in the Arts which had its Gala Opening. We have been privileged to be members of the Museum's Advisory Board and the week that we spent there enjoying the festivities is something that we will never forget.

We have a basic plan now of taking four one week vacations each year, knowing all too well that Mary Gover, our most competent secretary, will keep the office running and with the assistance of two of our colleagues keep all of our patients in good health. I mention this because we suddenly gave ourselves a dividend when we were invited to attend some functions in Hong Kong during the month of May. When that became known to a certain kind friend, we were extended an invitation to be the guests of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music for another five days. We felt just like Isaac Stern must have felt when he made the movie, From Mao to Mozart!

In June we had a most delightful week-end at Rancho Santa Fe with our good friends, the Fords. In July we joined the Alexander Saunders in Santa Barbara to help celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Music Academy of the West. The end of October found us in Honolulu exercising our visitation rights with Lizzie Victor, The Lei Maker.

With all of our travelling I am sure that it will sound as if we are really not working very hard relative to our Practice of Medicine but the truth of the matter is that we think we do work a lot harder than some of our younger colleagues!

We have had some rather interesting things happen to us this year at home. Viktoria Mullova was the first Shenson Young Artist Debut Fund recipient with the San Francisco Symphony in April. Remember her name since we are sure that you are going to hear much more of this amazing Russian violinist. In October our second recipient was Emile Naoumoff, a 24 year old Bulgarian born, Paris resident pianist whom we know will set the music world on fire. And speaking of music, we have had the pleasure of collaborating with Richard Pontzious (former music critic of the Examiner) who is now in the Far East and is in the process of organizing the Asian Youth Orchestra. Closer to home the Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara has just completed its new three million dollar building which will have, among other things, the Shenson Library which will be the repository for all of the Theodore Wores memorabilia.

We must be honest with you and tell you that everything does not always come up roses! After some 35 years our very able and devoted Japanese gardener has retired and we are fighting raccoons on Nob Hill who are tearing up our lawn! However, the one bright spot every evening when we come home after a hard day's work is to find our faithful feline mistress, Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street who has been with us the past 15 years, still waiting at the front door.

What more can we say but have Happy Holidays and let us hope that the coming year be filled with health, happiness and reunions with all of you. Quite unexpectedly we will be able to wish these greetings in person to some of our friends since we will spend the last nine days of 1987 in New York City.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Ben and Jess

HOLIDAY GREETINGS 1988!

We started 1988 in New York City and we will end 1988 in New York City. Last December we had such a delightful week in the East that we decided to do the same thing this year. After returning home on January 1, 1988 we stayed in San Francisco, for the most part, until mid-May. We did enjoy a somewhat unexpected week-end the end of February in Rancho Santa Fe with our good friends the Fords who were then off to Europe in the Spring for six months. In April Dr. Morton N. Swartz was the Shenson Visiting Professor of Clinical Medicine at Stanford so we went down to the Campus on several occasions.

Before going to Paris and London on May 14th we were happy to sponsor Anne-Sophie Mutter's San Francisco Symphony Debut which turned out to be tremendously successful. We were pleased that we had an opportunity to get to know this young, charming violinist on a more personal basis. Thanks to Christopher Clark and his Great Performance Tours we could not have had a more delightful Opera tour. Having not been to Paris in over twenty years it was fun rediscovering this beautiful City, mainly on foot, thanks to some glorious weather. We did enjoy the three operas we attended and our trips to Giverny and Chateau Chantilly could not have been more interesting. London is always an exciting City and this year was no exception. The highlight was going to Glyndebourne although every day in London was a highlight.

July found us enjoying a long sunny week-end in Mendocino and then we had our annual visit to Honolulu the last week of August. Once again we were totally spoiled by the warm and gracious hospitality of our many Island friends. Two nights after returning home from Honolulu we attended the Symphony Gala and then two nights after that the Opera Gala. Our guest at both was Mary Costa who, once again, captured the hearts of everyone she met. Jess' 50th Lowell High School Class Reunion took place on October 15th and with classmate Carol Channing it was truly a most memorable evening.

Our on-going project relative to the work of Theodore Wores continued throughout the year. As a result of a request by the United States Department of State Chief of Protocol, Mrs. Selwa Roosevelt, and the Curator of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms, Clement E. Conger, two Wores paintings, one of Yosemite and one of the Grand Canyon, now hang in the refurbished Blair House in Washington, D.C. We should also tell you that Ben is now on the Board of Governors of the Stanford Medical Alumni Association and Jess is on the Board of Governors of the San Francisco Symphony.

Earlier this month we attended a most important medical seminar in Palm Springs and now we are looking forward to checking in to the Hotel Pierre in New York City on December 24th.

As you can see 1988 has been a busy and interesting year for us. If for any reason we did not get to see all of our friends during our travels this year we hope that our paths will cross next year. We should hasten to add that in spite of all our extra curricular activities mentioned above the Practice of Medicine is still the Main Event and these other activities only the Side-shows.

As in the past, Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street joins us in sending warmest and best greetings for the Holidays and a Healthy, Happy and Prosperous 1989.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS 1989

The last week of 1988 was spent in New York where we could not have had a more delightful time. This last week of 1989 will find us back in New York. Between our two visits we have been busy, healthy and had an absolutely wonderful year! The Practice of Medicine is still the "Main Event" but this year many extra-curricular activities also kept us well occupied.

We were happy to sponsor Midori and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg as part of the Shenson Young Artist Debut Fund with our San Francisco Symphony in January and April and then Annie Chang and Matt Haimovitz in September and October. Each of these outstanding young artists had a personality of their own and we were pleased to get to know each one personally. In March we sponsored Mitsuko Shirai and her husband who appeared on the San Francisco Performances Series. This year the Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund sponsored Mary Mills and Hans Choi during the ten week Merola Opera Training Program. Mary will be an Adler Fellow in 1990 and Hans is busy in New York City. Last year's recipients, Cynthia Jacobi and Hong-Shen Li, gave a concert for those who have supported the Fund at the end of January. At the present time Cynthia is auditioning in Europe and Hong-Shen is an Adler Fellow. April found us attending the second Ring Cycle at the Metropolitan Opera which could not have been more exciting and which afforded us a "bonus" visit with many of our New York friends.

In April Dr. Frederic Coe was the first Shenson Visiting Professor at the Stanford School of Medicine followed by Dr. Robert Glickman in May and Dr. John Murray at the end of September. Each contributed their clinical expertise to the students and house staff and all emphasized the importance of bed-side evaluation and care.

On March 4th we flew over to Honolulu for two days before going on to Maui for a short medical seminar. The beginning of August afforded us a delightful week-end with the Connoisseurs Council of the Asian Art Museum in Hanford, California, where Libby and Bill Clark were our hosts. June 23rd found us having our annual week-end with Pat and Carol Ford at Rancho Santa Fe which was followed on July 21st with our annual visit to Santa Barbara to be with Lulu and Sandy Saunderson. The end of July was the annual meeting of the National Advisory Board of the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington where we had a great week and had the opportunity of checking up on nine Theodore Wores paintings that are in various public buildings in Washington, including the White House. As a result of that visit and our contact with the Art in Embassies Program, a Wores painting will soon be on its way to the American Embassy in Tokyo and another Wores painting will be going to the American Embassy in Mauritius. Wores' A Street in Ika will soon be part of the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York!

We did return to Honolulu for our one week annual Fall visit on August 25th and returned home just in time to attend both the Symphony and Opera galas. Somewhat unexpectedly we went to Switzerland for ten days on October 10th for a most outstanding tour. The Wallace Holladays called us from Washington and asked us to join them on a ten day visit to some of the private homes that had fabulous art collections. The weather and Fall colors were beautiful and all in all it was a memorable visit.

We missed the earthquake!! On our return Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street welcomed us with open paws and we were pleased to find out we had no damage. Now we are looking forward to the coming year of 1990 and hope and trust that this last decade of the Century will be filled with all good things for you and all of our friends. We also hope and trust that our paths will cross and that we will all have many happy times together.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS - 1990

Although it was only twenty-four hours we did start 1990 in New York where we enjoyed the 1989 Holidays. Having had such a great time we plan to do the same thing this year arriving at the Pierre on December 23rd and returning home January 1st.

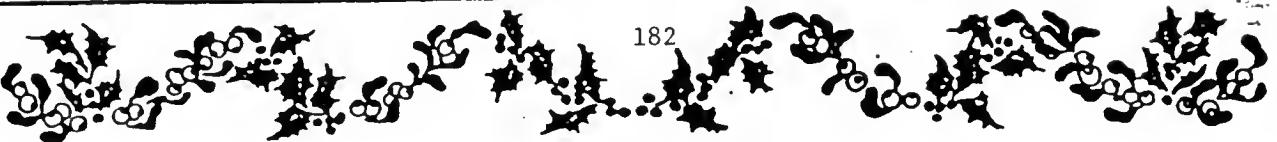
When we came home we found that our little Miss Blackie Jr. III of Washington Street had gone to Cat Heaven. This was not a surprise since we knew that after 18 years she was very ill. She had had good medical care but we realized it was just a matter of a short time before she would leave us. After two months of a relatively empty house, Miss Blackie Jr. IV of Washington Street arrived and has now taken over her duties as Mistress of the House!

This has been a busy year for us but a most happy and rewarding one. We did a bit more travelling than usual and our first trip was at the end of March when we went to Washington, D.C. for the Annual Meeting of the National Advisory Board of the National Museum for Women in the Arts and also attended its Annual Gala. Stan Bromley, General Manager of the Four Seasons Hotel in Georgetown, could not have been more hospitable as were our many good friends in Washington. The end of May we were back at the Halekulani Hotel in Honolulu to help celebrate Dr. Maurice Eliaser's important birthday. August found us in the Orient with the Asian Youth Orchestra which in itself could fill pages of this Holiday Letter. After auditioning nearly one thousand young instrumentalists from all over the Pacific Rim Richard Pontzious, the founder of the AYO, selected 110 ranging in age from 12 to 24. Sir Yehudi Menuhin was Music Director and conducted the first four concerts. We joined the group in Kumamoto for the first concert on August 10th and then all of us went together to Tokyo for two more concerts which were most enthusiastically received. While in Tokyo we had a delightful visit with Ambassador Michael Armacost and his wife, Bonnie, where we saw one of our Theodore Wores' blossom paintings of Saratoga in their living room. By coincidence the National Museum for Women in the Arts' exhibition opened in Tokyo while we were there so we attended the festive ribbon cutting ceremony. From Taiwan where we had two concerts we went to Hong Kong and were then taken by our great friends, the Harillelas, to Bangkok for 2½ delightful days. Returning to Hong Kong for the AYO's final two concerts we had a delightful reunion dinner with Sally Aw Sian and her family. It was Sally's original generous financial support that enabled the Asian Youth Orchestra to become a reality.

During this year we have had the pleasure of sponsoring several young artists with our Symphony and the San Francisco Performances. These were Olaf Baer, Andrea Lucchesini, Annie Chang, Dang Thai Sun and Gil Shaham. For the Shenson Visiting Professor of Clinical Medicine at Stanford we were happy to have during the year Dr. Alexander Reeves (Dartmouth), Dr. J. Willis Hurst (Emory University) and Dr. Stephen Wasserman, (U.C., San Diego). Speaking of Stanford Medical School, this year marked our combined 90th Class Reunion (Ben's 50th; Jess' 40th).

To celebrate Ben's Diamond Jubilee Birthday we had 75 people for cocktails on November 1st (his actual birthday), November 2nd and again on November 3rd. With a marvellous bright full moon to enhance our view from Bridge to Bridge they were really nights to remember and we are sure that all of our good friends enjoyed being with us. We were only sorry that many of you were not able to join us.

Medicine is still the Main Event but we are pleased to have Sideshows, such as Travel, Music and Art all of which enrich our lives. We regret that we were not able to see all of you this past year but trust that we can make up for this in 1991. May the New Year hold Health, Happiness and Prosperity for all!



"HOLIDAY GREETINGS!"

We hope that 1991 has been as happy, healthy and exciting for you as it has been for us. One of the great highlights this year was the spectacular black-tie dinner party in March hosted by the Merola Opera Program in our honor. It was an evening that brought together many facets of our musical interests and many friends from as far away as Honolulu and Florida. A night that we will never forget.

Before the March party we did go to Honolulu for the opening of the Taiji Harada exhibition. We had been helpful in having this exhibition first shown at the Triton Museum of Art following which the exhibit went to Chicago and New York where we also saw it. On March 22nd Jess celebrated a special birthday and later that month we were happy to host Sir Yehudi and Lady Diana Menuhin here in San Francisco for his 75th birthday. Our San Francisco Symphony had a special performance in his honor.

April found us in Washington, D.C. at the annual Gala for the National Museum of Women in the Arts and the meeting of the National Advisory Board of the Museum. The beginning of May we went down to Los Angeles for the opening of the Taiji Harada exhibition which, after its showing there, returned to Japan.

In June the Merola Opera Program brought twenty young artists who had been auditioned and selected to San Francisco for ten weeks of intensive training in all aspects of opera. This year the Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund sponsored Man-Hua Gao and Zheng Zhou. Man-Hua Gao won first place at the Grand Finals and Zheng Zhou was asked to continue into Western Opera Theater.

We joined the Asian Youth Orchestra in Tokyo on August 14 and when they went to Singapore we went directly to Hong Kong and then continued with the group to Beijing and Shanghai. The weather, which is normally very hot in August, could not have been more delightful in China. We returned home in time for the Symphony Gala and the opening of our Fall Opera Season. This year the opera season was particularly excellent and we were so proud of Ann Panagulias who starred in War and Peace.

Licia Albanese was honored by us here in San Francisco when she came to celebrate the 50th anniversary since she first sang on the stage of our Opera House. It was indeed a very festive week for all and one which we know Licia Albanese enjoyed tremendously.

October 10th we joined seven good friends from Washington, D.C. in Brussels where we spent five days before going on to The Hague for four days. The tour was truly outstanding and was equal to the excellent art tours we had with these friends in Switzerland (1989) and London (1990). Unfortunately while we were in Brussels we missed the fantastic debut of Evgeny Kissen whom we sponsored for San Francisco Performances.

The first of the three Shenson Visiting Professors of Clinical Medicine at Stanford was Dr. Robert Mollering and the second one was Dr. George Canellos. The third one will be Dr. Samuel Rapaport in January 1992.

On the morning of December 14th the Temple Emanu-El celebrated our Music Endowment Fund with a special service. We were particularly happy that so many of our friends were able to join us.

During all of the above activities Miss Blackie Jr. IV of Washington Street continued to be our faithful mistress waiting patiently for our return. We are sure she will be in the window on December 31st when we will be returning from ten days in New York and yes, we continue with our very active Practice of Medicine!!

May the coming Holidays be happy and joyous ones for you and we trust that 1992 will be a healthy and peaceful one for all.



ben / jess

1992

New Year's Day was a busy one for us catching up with all that had accumulated during our delightful Holiday week in New York City. This year our Practice of Medicine continued to be our main event and although we are trying to slow down we do seem busier than ever. We have, however, taken off for a few extra trips relative to our non-medical projects. We can do this now since we have an excellent medical office that is available should any of our patients be in need of immediate care and, of course, Mary Gover, our able secretary for sixteen years is in the office during the working week. She is also kind enough to take care of our home and Miss Blackie Jr. IV of Washington Street while we are away.

In February we went to Honolulu for one week to see Encounters with Paradise at the Honolulu Academy of Arts that featured Wores' The Lei Maker, The Barber of Seville with "our" Ann Panagulias and a Board Meeting of the Special Education Center of Hawaii. April found us in Washington, D.C. to attend the National Museum of Women in the Arts' Board Meeting and Gala and to enjoy the magnificent cherry blossoms. We will never forget our drive through Kenwood where the blossoms were at their very height.

In May we went down to Pasadena to see the Pacific Asia Museum where we will be having a major exhibition of Theodore Wores' Japanese paintings, which will also include some of his San Francisco Chinatown paintings, in April 1993. It was back to Washington, D.C. in June since Alan Greenspan had invited Ben to serve on the Advisory Board of the Federal Reserve Board's Fine Art Collection and he attended his first meeting. We also attended the 50th anniversary of the American Symphony League that happened to be in Washington, D.C. just a few days earlier. After returning from Washington we attended the dedication of the Carol Channing Auditorium at the "new" Lowell High School. Carol, along with twelve others, including Jess, were honored for their contribution to the arts. and their pictures placed on the new Wall of Fame in the theater.

The day after the Merola Opera Grand Finals in August we were off to Fukuoka to meet our Asian Youth Orchestra students and Faculty. During the next two weeks we visited five cities where the orchestra played. Besides Fukuoka they were Kumamoto, Osaka, Nagoya and Tokyo. When the last performance occurred in Tokyo we flew down, on our own, to Hong Kong for 24-hours and then were invited by our very good friends, the Harilelas, to join them for three days in Singapore and then three days in Penang. Having not been to either of these countries since 1976 we certainly found many interesting changes. We returned home to San Francisco the day before Labor Day in an attempt to try and catch up with a few of the things that had accumulated. It actually took several weeks to do so. That first week we were back we attended the opening Symphony Gala and the opening of our Fall Opera Season.

This year the Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund sponsored James Caputo and Richard Nickol during the Merola Opera Summer Program and we sponsored Thomas Hampson and Santiago Rodriguez with San Francisco Performances. During the 1992/93 Season of the San Francisco Symphony we are sponsoring Helene Grimaud and Sarah Chang. At the Stanford Medical School Dr. Samuel Rappaport was our eleventh Shenson Visiting Professor of Clinical Medicine and the twelfth one in November was Dr. Philip Frederick Sparling.

Although our travels took us to many interesting places in the United States, Hawaii and Asia, our respective visits were brief ones so we were not able to see some of our many good friends. Hopefully we will be able to make up for that in 1993. We will be spending the last week of this year in New York City so we hope that your Holidays will be as festive as ours. May the New Year of 1993 be one filled with lots of good Health, Happiness and Prosperity for all!!!



After our delightful Holiday in New York City we returned home on January 1, 1993 and this has certainly been a busy, interesting year.

On May 1st we were down in Pasadena for the opening of Theodore Wores: An American Artist in Meiji Japan at the Pacific Asia Museum. We could not have been more pleased with the outstanding installation of the exhibition and the enthusiastic response the exhibit has and is still receiving.

Prior to our five day visit to Pasadena where we were royally hosted, we were in Washington, D.C. the end of March for the Annual Gala of the National Museum for Women in the Arts. Again we spent a most festive week in Washington but unfortunately the cherry blossoms were not out like they had been last year. Between the beginning of April and August 15th we stayed close to San Francisco but on August 16th we flew to Amsterdam to join our Asian Youth Orchestra. Within two hours after joining them we were all on our way to Kiel for their first performance in Germany after having played in Vienna, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. This was followed by performances in Leipzig, Dresden, Berlin and Bad Homberg. At each concert this young Asian group received a standing ovation and outstanding critical reviews. When the group returned to the Orient we went to Paris for four glorious days.

On October 6th we flew to Glasgow to meet eight friends from Washington, D.C. and spent the next ten days enjoying the sights, sounds and Art of Scotland and, of course, some of the Scotch Whiskey. One thing we did not expect was nine full days of SUN!

This year the Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund, through the Merola Opera Program, sponsored Claudia Waite and Elizabeth Grohowski. Following the program Elizabeth returned to New York City to make her New York City Opera debut. Claudia will be returning as an Adler Fellow. We were pleased to sponsor the debut of Sarah Chang with our San Francisco Symphony. She is certainly an outstanding artist. Alexander Schtarkman was the young pianist who we sponsored with San Francisco Performances. Our Stanford Visiting Professors this year were Doctor Ed Holmes and his wife, Doctor Judith Swain and Doctor Stephen Malawista.

Fortunately we have had the pleasure of seeing and entertaining many of our friends here in San Francisco during this year. Unfortunately, however, for the first time in several years we did not get to Honolulu but we certainly hope to do so in 1994. While our extra curricular activities in the Arts have continued to keep us very active, Medicine is still the "Main Event". Before the end of this year we will be having our annual visit to New York City for the Holidays arriving at The Pierre Hotel the morning of December 24th and returning home on January 1, 1994.

Miss Blackie Jr. IV of Washington Street, our faithful feline mistress, joins us in wishing you a great New Year. May it be one filled with Health, Happiness, Prosperity and Contentment!

Ben *Jean*



SEASON'S GREETINGS



After our exciting Christmas week in New York City we came home to plan 1994. On February 13th our good friend Midori performed in San Francisco with our Symphony following which she came home for dinner. Several days later, thanks to Mary and Charles Tanenbaum, the Shenson Awards honoring those full and part-time employees at St. Francis Hospital who demonstrated a "sense of the therapeutic value of caring" were presented. Our professional activities prevented us from getting to the Pacific Asia Museum in Pasadena for the closing of the Wores Japanese exhibition which had an excellent installation and catalogue. Healdsburg had not changed in the sixty years that had elapsed since we were there on the occasion of visiting in April with Carol and Pat Ford who were spending a month there. April also found us in Washington, D.C. attending the meetings of the National Advisory Board of the National Museum for Women in the Arts and Ben also attended his Federal Reserve Board Art Committee meeting. On April 18th the Hebrew Union College, San Francisco Associates, honored us at a magnificent dinner and established a scholarship fund in our name and the Stanford Medical Alumni Association Day in April found each of us receiving the Distinguished Service Award of the year.

For a complete change of pace we went over to Lanai in May for a few days and finished the week in Honolulu seeing many of our good friends in Alohaland. In June we were the guests of the Alexander Saundersons in Santa Barbara for the opening of the Academy of the West and the Gala for the Santa Barbara Symphony.

On July 29th we flew to Hong Kong for the 1994 inaugural concert of the Asian Youth Orchestra which honored our friend of many years, Sally Aw Sian the founding patroness. Travelling with the Asian Youth Orchestra we visited Shanghai, Beijing, Nanjing and Taiwan which were all exciting but then we had to return home and get down to work.

Poor Jess came down with Pancreatitis during our "bonus" trip to Provence, France, in October and he spent five days in the hospital in Aix-en-Provence. His book, My WEAK in Provence, is at the publishers at the present time! On our return Jess was honored by the St. Francis Memorial Hospital for his forty years of service to that institution.

November 1st was a day which neither of us will ever forget! We were indeed flattered by the California Historical Society in being the honored guests at a magnificent lunch at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel. November 1st also happened to be Ben's birthday so you can imagine how he felt when Claudia Waite (the Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship participant of the Merola Opera Program last year and currently an Adler Fellow) sang Happy Birthday with a chorus of almost four hundred.

The Holidays will soon be here and we are looking forward to our annual trip to New York City. We expect to check into the Pierre Hotel on December 23rd for what we know will be a very festive week. We certainly hope that your Holidays will be equally happy and joyous and that the coming New Year will be one filled with nothing but the very best of good health, happiness, prosperity and contentment. You can be sure that Miss Blackie Jr. IV of Washington Street joins both of us in wishing you ... HAPPY HOLIDAYS.



HOLIDAY GREETINGS - 1996

This year of 1996 has been a tremendous adjustment for me and I almost hesitated in sending this Holiday Letter. I did not send one last year, but many of you missed it! Of course, 1995 was not the happiest year for me. As you will read I have kept very busy, but as I have said so many, many times, keeping busy is the best medicine for me.

January started out with a delightful small dinner at home for Diana and Yehudi Menuhin on January 6th. The following day I was privileged to be asked to join the Menuhin Family in celebrating Maruha's 100th birthday. On January 29th a musical tribute was held for Ben at Temple Emanu-El to a near capacity audience. I will forever be grateful to all those wonderful artists who performed at the concert. It was truly an evening that will live with me for ever!

I celebrated my 75th birthday on March 22nd by attending the Merola Opera Program Gala. Our long time friend, Giorgio Tozzi, was the honored guest and then the next night my cousin, Irma Levin, also hosted a cocktail reception. At the end of March I helped to underwrite the appearance of Michael Feinstein at the Osher Marin Jewish Community Center in memory of Ben. Later in the year I also sponsored the recitals of Evgeny Kissin and Bryn Terfel in Ben's memory.

In early April I was in Washington, D.C. to attend the National Advisory Board Meeting of the National Museum for Women in the Arts, their outstanding Gala and also attended the Art Advisory Committee of the Federal Reserve Board. While I was in Washington, D.C. I had received an invitation from the Prime Minister of Japan to attend a lunch in Tokyo. Unfortunately I could not join President and Mrs. Bill Clinton when they presented Theodore Wores' painting, Iris Garden, Hori Kori, Tokyo, to the Emperor and Empress of Japan.

I made an unexpected quick visit to New York City on May 18th to attend the Hollis Taggart exhibition, American Artists in Japan: 1859-1929. Having loaned several of my Theodore Wores Japanese canvases for the exhibition it was requested that I attend the opening. When George Ellis, Director of the Honolulu Academy of Arts asked me to come to Hawaii to help celebrate the 10th anniversary since Ben and I gave the Academy Wores' The Lei Maker, I could not refuse. The reception was certainly one of the most outstanding events I have ever attended in Honolulu. Needless to say, it was most heart-warming for me to enjoy such magnificent Island hospitality.

Because of Ben's illness last year I did not travel with the Asian Youth Orchestra, but this year I joined the group in Hong Kong and then accompanied them to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Hanoi and Manila, returning home just in time for the opening of our Symphony Season and Opera Season. Just four weeks later I was off to Lucca, Italy, upon the invitation of Jacquey and Alain Piallat. Our "home away from home" was the Villa Donati and after our visit there we drove to Aix-en-Provence for three days. Since returning home life has continued to be busy, but I plan to stay very close to San Francisco until December 20th when I will be checking into the Metropolitan Club in New York City for ten days. I will be home to celebrate a very quiet New Year's Eve with Miss Blackie Jr. IV of Washington Street, who naturally sends you all her greetings!

As 1997 approaches I trust it will be a year of the very best of good health, happiness, prosperity and contentment for all of you. I anticipate another busy year and hopefully our paths will cross, but if this is not possible be assured that I will be thinking of each and every one of you.

Holidays Greetings - 1997

This year has been an incredibly busy one, but I will only mention the highlights otherwise it could take pages.

On January 1st, I was flying home after ten delightful days in New York City.

January 19th, Dr. Daniel Podolsky, Professor of Medicine at Harvard, was the first Shenson Visiting Professor at Stanford Medical School. While at Stanford, he also addressed the first meeting of the Ben Shenson Society - a new society for 3rd and 4th year medical students at Stanford who plan to go into Internal Medicine.

On March 4th, Anne-Sophie Mutter gave a recital, and two days later, Tom Hampson gave his recital. March 14th was Merola Opera Program's annual Gala. This was their most successful Gala with Tom as the guest of honor.

The Marin Osher JCC celebrated its 50th anniversary on March 22nd with "Songs of our Fathers." This was a very special evening for me since it was my birthday and I sponsored the evening in memory of my parents.

I was in Washington, D.C. on April 11th for the 10th anniversary of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, a project Ben and I have been involved with the past 12 years. While there, I also attended the board meeting of the Federal Reserve Board Art Committee.

In May we had the first Shenson Young Artist debut with our Symphony. Nikolai Lujansky, an outstanding pianist, received a standing ovation.

June 25th found me on my way to Kuala Lumpur to attend the last 3 days of the Asian Youth Orchestra Camp. We were in Hong Kong on July 1st, the day of the Change-over. It was a night I will never forget. One of the highlights was the magnificent fireworks and illuminated floats that came through the Hong Kong Harbor. The young musicians who performed during the festivities were warmly received. All involved were excited to have Yo-Yo Ma as the soloist. After leaving Hong Kong we visited six major cities in China and then traveled on to South Korea. After the first concert in Seoul, on July 16th, I returned home.

I was in Honolulu from August 19th to the 24th and enjoyed wonderful Island hospitality from many friends. It was with reluctance I left after such a brief visit.

September 5th was a "Night to Remember". It was our Opera's 75th anniversary and the opening of the Opera House after having been closed for seismic repair and renovation the previous 18 months. The Gala was magnificent and I was happy that I could have Licia Albanese, Lucine Amara, and Delton Harrison as my guests.

On September 26th, I was down at Stanford to help celebrate my 55th class reunion.

On October 12th, I was off to Baden-Baden, Munich, and Vienna. I joined Billie & Wally Holladay and Dorothy and Ray LeBlanc. The five of us had a grand time but again, the days went by all too quickly.

I returned home in time to greet the second Shenson Visiting Professor, Dr. John Sergent, Chief Medical Officer of Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, TN. Fortunately, Dr. Sergent was also able to meet and speak with members of the Ben Shenson Society.

November 4th, Sarah Chang gave an outstanding West Coast recital debut at Cal Performances in a sold-out Zellerbach Hall. Ben and I had sponsored Sarah when she first appeared with our San Francisco Symphony about three years ago. She is now quite a young lady at the age of 16!

I did go back to Washington, D.C. on November 6th for three days to help celebrate the opening of the Elisabeth A. Kasser Wing at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. It was a festive time, and while there I had a reunion with some of my Lucca friends from last year.

On November 13th, Tzimon Barto received a standing ovation on his first night with the San Francisco Symphony as one of the Shenson Young Artists.

The next morning I left for Honolulu, and the following evening I attended the Honolulu Opera Ball seeing many old friends and meeting new ones.

My last trip for this year will be to New York City on December 23rd. I'll return home on January 1st to start 1998 in San Francisco.

As always, my warmest and best wishes to each and every one of you. I do apologize if I was near your home and did not call, but my visits were rather brief. I hope the New Year will be filled with nothing but the best of good health, happiness, prosperity, and contentment. Miss Blackie Jr. IV joins me in these greetings. Of course there continues to remain a tremendous void in my life, but as my brother often said "Keep The Faith!"

APPENDIX B

Reprinted from
San Francisco Examiner
and Chronicle,
November 12, 1967.

THE WIDOW'S REMARKABLE GALLERY

by Eloise Dungan

Theodore Wores: artist with a wanderlust

A diminutive woman with sparkling hazel eyes and a halo of soft blond hair stood before a towering portrait titled "Miss Caroline Bauer" and said softly:

"I was 17, and it was my first long dress. It was blue peau de soie trimmed with sequins ... and it was beautiful."

A San Francisco art critic in 1910 called Theodore Wores' portrait of Miss Bauer "stunningly and brilliantly rendered." A year later, the artist married the model.

And more than half a century later, the portrait hangs with scores of other paintings in a sentimental Sutter Street gallery to which Mrs. Caroline Bauer Wores has the only key.

The gallery itself is a key to happy memories of her years as the wife of a San Francisco-born artist whose paintings, with their zest for color and masterful drawing, capture the fancy of such collectors as Prince Henry of Bourbon, Lord Rosebery of England, William Randolph Hearst and Prince Ito of Japan.

There are perhaps 60 paintings in Mrs. Wores' intimate gallery. In a closet are twice that number. Hundreds more hang in galleries, museums and collections all over the world.

The late Mr. Wores was a prolific painter. One of seven children born to Hungarian merchant Jacob Wores and his wife, Wores' career spanned 65 years and ended with his death here at age 78 in 1939.

"My husband spoke seven languages," Caroline Wores remembers. "When he went to a country to work, the first thing he did was schedule a language course at the university."

The first language he mastered was German, when he began studies at 17 in Munich. After that, a portable easel was a necessity for the peripatetic young artist-scholar.

He worked in Paris, Rome and Venice, where he met famed etcher-painter James Whistler. "Who in after years," Wores wrote, "became a good friend to me when I set out to crash the difficult gates of the London art pooh-bahs."

Wores' first exhibit was in 1881 in San Francisco. Soon, he was off again--to Japan, China, Spain, England, Hawaii, Samoa.

He returned to San Francisco in 1902 for what has been called "perhaps the largest one-man show ever held in Bohemian Club galleries." Even women were admitted to the club to view it.

After Wores wed the petite Miss Bauer, wanderlust dimmed. He taught in San Francisco art academies, painted portraits and landscapes and Chinatown scenes. But there was another frontier.

He took his young wife on a painting foray to the Canadian Rockies and in 1915-16 to Zuni, Acoma and Taos villages in the Southwest. Fifty of these Indian paintings were given by Mrs. Wores recently to Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.

Caroline Wores still remembers the dignified Indian who posed for her husband in an elaborate head-dress. He didn't speak but was suppressing smiles at the conversation he heard.

Mrs. Wores couldn't resist asking in careful English: "Eagle feathers?" "No, turkey," answered the chief.

"Aha!" Mrs. Wores cried triumphantly. "I KNEW you spoke English."



Mrs. Caroline Wores in her gallery in the Marines Memorial Building. From San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle, November 12, 1967.

Photograph by John Gorman



Mrs. Caroline Wores, with portrait painted by Theodore Wores before they married.
From San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle, November 12, 1967.

Photograph by John Gorman



The Lei Maker (Portrait of Lizzie Victor), by Theodore Wores, 1901.

The Shensons Resurrect an Artist

*The story of how two brothers, both medical alumni,
have contributed to the culture
of San Francisco and the Bay Area.*

from Stanford M.D., Summer/Fall, 1971.

HERE IS A CASE where two doctors really have tried to bring someone back to life," says Dr. Ben Shenson. The patient, in this case, is the world famous San Francisco born artist, Theodore Wores. Wores died in 1939, but through the efforts of Drs. Ben and A. Jess Shenson, his paintings live on.

For the past 12 years the Shenson brothers, both alumni of the Stanford University School of Medicine and now clinical faculty members at Stanford, have been actively involved in resurrecting Wores' work.

This summer the Shensons were honored by the State Senate of Hawaii for "contributing to the culture of Hawaii," after lending 56 of their Wores' paintings to a six-week exhibit in Honolulu. The Wores exhibit was presented at the impressive East-West Center, an 11-year-old international cultural center located on the University of Hawaii campus and operated by the U.S. State Department.

"The enthusiasm and spontaneity of the response to the exhibit were remarkable," Jess says. "The

paintings, most of which were done by Wores in Hawaii in 1901 and 1910-11, brought back memories of the turn of the century, when Honolulu was quite different from today."

Over the years the Shensons have also contributed to the culture of San Francisco and the Bay Area, and to the medical education of students at Stanford's School of Medicine.

In 1967, they donated the Shenson Pavilion to the Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara. This pavilion houses 30 of Wores' paintings, including the well-known blossom scenes painted in the Saratoga area during the 1920's and '30's.

"Back then, the Saratoga-San Jose area was full of orchards and not housing developments," Ben says. "When school children are taken to the pavilion today, they're very surprised to learn what that area looked like long before they were born."

In 1968, the brothers gave 30 oils by Wores, including many California scenes, to San Francisco's newly-constructed St. Francis Memorial Hospital.

Dr. A. Jess Shenson

Dr. Ben Shenson



A sculptured head of Theodore Wores, done by Melvin Earl Cummings in 1914, is surrounded by two of Wores' paintings in the Shenson Pavilion at Triton Museum of Art.



They also support the San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Symphony, and other affiliated groups.

The Shensons' association with Stanford dates back almost 40 years.

Ben obtained his A.B. from Stanford in 1936 and his M.D. in 1940. He did postgraduate work on the Stanford Medical Service at San Francisco Hospital, and upon completing his residency in 1942, was appointed instructor in medicine.

"I remained at Stanford as a full-time instructor until the completion of World War II," Ben says. "During that time I had the privilege of working closely with the late George De Forest Barnett, probably one of the most beloved and respected teachers Stanford has ever had."

Prior to his retirement in 1949, Dr. Barnett was chief of the Stanford Medical Service for 25 years. A renowned teacher, he looked upon his patients first as human beings and not, as he said, "merely as carriers of meningitis or flat feet."

"Dr. Barnett was a teacher," Ben says. "He was more concerned with instructing the students than in writing papers, doing research or attending meetings. His office was on the medical ward and he was available to his students at all times. During those years, he knew every student personally, which is a far cry from the way it is today."

In 1956, a year after Dr. Barnett's death, 20 of his former students and associates, including Ben Shenson, raised over \$500,000 to establish a professorship at Stanford in his name. Today the George De Forest Barnett professorship in medicine is one of the most respected chairs at the School of Medicine.

World War II interfered with Jess' education.

After obtaining his bachelor's degree from Stanford in 1942, he served on active duty with a U.S. Army infantry regiment as a medical corpsman until 1945, when he entered the Stanford School of Medicine. He received his M.D. in 1950 and joined his brother in private practice after a residency in Fresno.

Following the death of their father in 1950, the brothers established the Louis Shenson Memorial Fund, a loan fund for third- and fourth-year Stanford medical students who are also Stanford graduates. Recipients repay the loans, without interest, when they begin their medical practice.

"Over the last 20 years, the fund has done a great deal to help Stanford students complete their medical education," Ben says.

Today the brothers remain on the clinical faculty at Stanford in the Department of Medicine, Ben as associate professor and Jess as instructor.

Both bachelors, they have practiced internal medicine and cardiology in the San Francisco area for 25 years.

"We're the only two brothers I know of who practice the same specialty in the same office," Ben says.

The walls of the Shensons' offices at 450 Sutter Street, San Francisco, are graced with many of Theodore Wores' paintings. Their interest in the artist was sparked primarily by their lifelong friendship with his widow, Mrs. Carrie Wores.

"Carrie is a very close friend of our mother," Jess says, "and she has known us all our lives."

In the past decade, the Shensons have tracked down Wores' paintings everywhere from Bogota, New Jersey, to the airport at Honolulu.

"One woman who was going to sell us a painting missed us at the main airport at Honolulu," Jess



Shenson Pavilion, donated by Drs. Ben and Jess Shenson to the Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara, houses 30 paintings by Theodore Wores, including many of California scenes.

recalls, "so she jumped on a shuttle bus and took it out to the other part of the airport to find us. She said, 'It belongs with the other Wores.'"

Every major museum in California now houses paintings by Wores, thanks primarily to donations from the Shensons and the artist's widow.

The son of immigrant parents (his father was a Hungarian political refugee), Wores was born in San Francisco in 1858. At the age of 16, encouraged by his teachers at the San Francisco Art Association, he began seven years of study at the Munich Art Academy. Among his contemporaries in Europe was James McNeill Whistler.

When he returned to the United States in 1881, the story-telling quality of his work, particularly his scenes of San Francisco's Chinatown, won him much acclaim. His paintings sold very well locally. Governor and Mrs. Leland Stanford acquired *The Chinese Festival*. A member of the select Bohemian Club, he was commissioned to paint the portrait of Oscar Wilde in 1882.

Wores sailed for Japan in 1885, and for the next 25 years he made repeated visits to the Far East, Hawaii, London, and Spain. In 1902 he lamented that the Hawaiians had become "too civilized to be artistic" and said Honolulu was taking on the appearance of "a third-rate American city instead of

preserving the quaint charm of a semi-tropical town."

His visits to Hawaii resulted in two of his most famous paintings, *The Lei Maker* and *Diamond Head by Moonlight*, both of which were included in the exhibit in Honolulu last summer.

"*Diamond Head by Moonlight* had been missing for over 60 years," Jess says. "It turned up when the owner, Richard Smart, flew to Honolulu with the painting so it could be part of the East-West Center exhibit."

Known primarily as a portrait painter, Wores devoted the last 30 years of his life to historical representations of the Indians of British Columbia and New Mexico, and impressionistic paintings of California wildflowers.

In 1922 Stanford University exhibited 64 of his oils. The exhibit included paintings from Japan, Hawaii, Spain, Canada, New Mexico, and California.

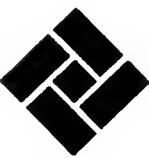
After Wores' death in 1939, his work was more or less forgotten for the next 20 years.

"Not many people saw his paintings during that time," Ben says. "But since 1960 or so my brother and I have been doing all we can to re-expose his work."

Judging from the recent upsurge of interest in Wores—reflected in a published memoir of his life, a traveling exhibition through northern California in 1968-69, and the acclaimed showing in Honolulu last summer—the operation has been a success.

—GARY CAVALLI

Stanford Medical Alumni Association



Distinguished Service Award



A. Jess Shenson, M.D.

We are grateful for your long-standing contributions to the Stanford University School of Medicine. Your tireless support and guidance have helped educate a generation of Stanford M.D.'s. Your loyal service exemplifies the behavior of a physician trained in the true Stanford tradition.


J. Burdette Nelson Jr., President
Stanford Medical Alumni Association


David Kern
David Kern, Dean
Stanford University School of Medicine

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Remarks made by Dr. Albert Shumate and
 Dr. William Gerdts at a California
 Historical Society luncheon honoring Ben
 Luncheon November 1, 1994 and Jess
 Shenson, November
 1, 1994.

Michael McCone

.... The building is just around the corner. It is a wonderful mess. They have started renovation but we do hope you will come by and take a look. It is really quite impressive. It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce Albert Shumate who is a man of the world, an author, historian, President Emeritus of the California Historical Society and a person held in great affection by everyone who has the privilege of knowing him.

Dr. Albert Shumate.

Dr. Albert Shumate

I am not speaking to-day of the illustrious Ben and Jess Shensons' career. All I am speaking to-day is of a few personal recollections of these two doctors. It was 1937 when I first met Dr. Ben Shenson. He was an Intern out at the County Hospital where I was a visiting dermatologist on the Stanford section. Ben was on the Stanford section of the hospital also. At that time you will remember that Stanford was in San Francisco and the County Hospital was divided between the University of California Medical and the Stanford Medical. For many years Ben has been a brilliant diagnostician in the field of Internal Medicine. Many times when I have had problems medically I have had the privilege of getting advice from Dr. Ben. Maybe that is something to do with the 90 years old that I am now, I am not sure. The doctor Shensons have been close to the California Historical Society for many years, especially in the field of art and artists of the 19th century of California and especially, of course, that of Theodore Wores. They also, as you know, have lived in a home on Russian Hill of great historical importance in a rather unique location in the central part of the center of a block with a long driveway going into it. That house was built by May Bacon Boggs right after the disaster of 06, her house having been destroyed, of course, in the fire. That house was sold by her to the Shensons, the house that the brothers still live in. Mrs. Boggs was an interesting person, a member for over thirty years of the California Historical Society and on the Board of Trustees at one time. She was born in 1863, I repeat that 1863, and when she was a youngster she was up in the old town of Shasta, which was a Gold Rush town, ghost town later and now a historical monument owned by the State. She also compiled a book, My Playhouse was a Stage Coach. This book is rare at the present time, quite scarce and quite expensive. She was a remarkable lady. On her 100th birthday in 1963 I was President of the California Historical Society, and was invited by the Shensons to a birthday party they gave for her and at that birthday party

I always remember once incident that took place. The photographer said to her, Mrs. Boggs, you are not smiling. Give us a big smile and she, as quick as a flash, said to him, I will not. My teeth are not very good any more!

I can tell you it is a pleasure to be here and a great pleasure and honor to be speaking about my friends, the brothers Shenson. As you all know they have done so much in enhancing the cultural life of our City. The city that they were born in, the city that they love so much and so I say, hail to the Shensons!

Our Speaker to-day is Dr. William Gerdts, who has come to San Francisco from New York City, accompanied by his wife, Abbie, who is also an art scholar and historian. A long time friend of the Shensons, Dr. Gerdts shares their passion for both visual and the musical arts. He received his B.A. from Amhurst in 1949 and followed that with his M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard. In 1992 he returned to Amhurst and received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters. He is America's foremost scholar on American Art. He has worked at the Norfolk Virginia Museum, the Newark Museum in New Jersey and at the University of Maryland he was both the director of the gallery and Professor of Art History. Since 1971 he has served at the City University of New York. His publications are milestones in the history of art. They include American Still-Life, American Impressionism, the just published literally last week I understand, Impressionists of New York, and his major work of 1990, Art Across America, in three volumes. The longest chapter in those three volumes is devoted to California. And the musical highlight of his career came in 1973 when he made his Metropolitan Opera debut in Aida as a blue skirted spear carrier. Dr William Gerdts ...

Ladies and Gentlemen: I think this maybe the largest audience before which I have appeared since my Met. debut. We spear carriers did not have many lines in those days. You all know that to-day is Ben's birthday as well. But I have some good news about that. I was here last year and while visiting with Ben and Jess, of course, I went and got a 'flu shot from Ben and it was fine and yesterday I came back and got another 'flu shot and I couldn't feel a thing. He is getting better!

Let me tell you how I will start off my -- and this is meant really not as a lecture but as a tribute -- let me tell you this little story though. I have a student at our school, the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and you know that that is the City University of New York and not New York University. N.Y. University is the rich private school, we are the poor public school. I have a student from California, from Sacramento, named Janay Wong and Janay took a course from me on American still-life painting and was enamoured with the work of Samuel Marsden Brooks, California's great still-life painter of the 19th century. She decided that she wanted to do more work on Brooks and so she is now doing an independent study or independent research. She came out this last Fall and received tremendous assistance on all levels; from museum folk like Jan Drysbach, at the Crocker in Sacramento where she started off at home, from the museums in this area, the Oakland Museum, the deYoung Museum, from major dealers such as John Garzoli, Alfred Harrison, Alfred at the Northpoint and John in San Rafael, and from private collectors like our good Dr. Shumate, Oscar Lemmer and others and a great deal of help, particularly a great deal of help here at the California Historical Society and behind all this assistance was the support given by Ben and Jess. In other words the sense of cooperation, help and belief in what she was doing has really meant a tremendous amount for this very, very bright and able scholar. Whether she goes on with Brooks work after this semester I do not know but I am really tremendously grateful to all of you in addition, of course, specifically to Ben and Jess. But I am not at all surprised. I had the support of all these same sources for the California section of my book, Art Across America, both through correspondence and visits here to San Francisco which is just about

the favorite city for my wife and myself, even though we are hide bound New Yorkers. No area of the country has responded more to my need for assistance in doing Art Across America than San Francisco, none offered more reception and within the City none more than Ben and Jess. It is to me, in a way, not Philadelphia but San Francisco which is really the City of brotherly love.

My wife, Abigail, and I first met Ben and Jess several decades ago in similar but separate circumstances. Those meetings centered upon the life, the art, the career of one of the principal San Francisco artists of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Theodore Wores. A native born here in your great City. Also perhaps all of you here know the basic facts but anyway, the good doctors and their very wonderful Mother, Rose Shenson, whom Abbie and I also had the pleasure of knowing for quite some time, they knew Theodore Wores towards the end of his life and remained a dear, close friend of his wife and widow, Caroline Wores. Rose Shenson and Carrie Wores attended concerts together and then assisted her in moving from her ten room apartment where she had lived for a quarter of a century and where Wores paintings had been stored, and cared for her in her later years. The Shenson family first received some paintings as gifts from Carrie Wores and then fell heirs to the paintings that remained in the Wores Estate, as well as a wealth of documentation on Wores career and life and by extension upon art life during Wores long lifetime. This was important because Wores was in his day not only a painter of great repute but also an important teacher in this City. The first instructor at the San Francisco Art Students League and later Dean of the San Francisco Art Institute. But you know the enthusiasm that has developed in recent years in regional American art and in art history generally perhaps, and in California painting in particular, we may forget how little interest there was even as recently as several decades ago. Wores his art and significance had been almost forgotten but Rose, Ben and Jess would not allow that to continue and toward that end in bringing focus on Theodore they journeyed around the country to make scholars aware of his art. My good wife in forming the inventory of American painting as the major Bicentennial project of the National Museum of American Art in Washington which was and is a data bank of the work of all painters active in this country through 1915, an impossible project which nonetheless was successfully achieved, eagerly received the Shensons and their material on Wores. I, in my obsessive compulsion to create a perfect library on American art and artists & explore all facets of our American art history, selected some similar materials from the Shensons. Thus our separate initial friendship with the Shenson family and while Abigail left the Wores material at the National Museum, after we married she moved to New York City with me so she moved right back in among the Wores books, catalogues, files and the like in the library at our home. Well that was the beginning as they say, of a beautiful friendship and we found that we had far more in common than we had initially suspected. But more of that later.

I would like to speak now of the wonderful work Ben and Jess did in promoting the awareness of Theodore's art. Through the travelling exhibitions that circulated through this country and their extremely generous donations of examples of Wores paintings to museums all over the United States including such institutions and depositories as the

Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the National Museum of American Art in Washington, three examples donated to the White House, two to Blair House in Washington along with others to smaller institutions such as the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, New York. Through their efforts Ben and Jess have resuscitated Theodore Wores. But they have really done far more than that. As a scholar of and writer about American regional art, I know that one of the major frustrations has been, and unfortunately remains actually to some extent, the fact that even as regional art, sometimes of the highest quality and great individuality, even as it has been revived not only here in California but throughout this country though in some regions, some States and some communities more than others, that art is tended still to remain only in those areas. Californians now know about California art. Hoosiers know about Indiana art. New Englanders know about New England art but rarely is this artistry seen and brought to the attention of an audience beyond its own origin. While Ben and Jess saw to it that this was not true of Theodore Wores and in doing so they really provided the opening wedge broadening the awareness of art that has heretofore been considered local or regional. Of course, Theodore was an exceptional painter and he was not only one of the first American painters to visit Japan, but the first to really live there and create a very sizeable body of work there so that in the championing of Wores art they were also advancing the history of American-Asian cultural connections and as such really furthering cultural rapport. The proof of that certainly was the splendid exhibition of Theodore's paintings held in Japan itself in 1986 for which they were the principle lenders under the sponsorship of the newspaper, the Asahi Shimbun. All phases of Theodore's work were included although the Japanese pictures naturally took pride of place. The catalogue of that show, incidentally, is a marvellous publication containing as it does the short essay by the late, great Dr. Joseph Baird and an introduction by our good friends the doctors, though I must admit to not having read the main essay since it is in Japanese. However I must say that the full color reproductions of all the pictures shown make it a knock-out catalogue for everyone and even the black-and-white taken from photographs of other wonderful Japanese paintings sadly unlocated to date, are fascinating. The Japanese subject paintings maybe to-day the best known phase of Wores' art, but there is, of course, much more than that. He is one of the finest recorders of San Francisco's Chinatown and the doctors donated one of the artist's greatest pictures, The Chinese Fishmonger, to the National Museum of American Art in Washington. To the Honolulu Academy of Fine Arts they presented his finest Hawaiian image, The Lei Maker. Most treasured now on the Islands. And their donation of the particular wonderful landscapes of California by Theodore to the Triton Museum in Santa Clara has formed the core collection of that small but very dynamic institution. Among other recipients of their generosity of art should be mentioned too and that is the St. Francis Hospital here in San Francisco with thirty wonderful examples of Wores art to lighten the load of all there and a tour of which I recommend though preferably as a visitor rather than a patient. But if you are a patient, this is the hospital with which Ben and Jess have their affiliations so as patients we would all be in very good hands. Given Theodore Wores significance in San Francisco and also his longevity, the good doctors sponsorship of his art has an unusual situation in terms of cultural sponsorship. On the one hand we certainly consider Wores a figure of historical significance. After all he was for instance one of the first Westerners to open up Japan artistically. Since Ben and Jess knew him

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personally they have, in a sense, been supporting a recent artist so that they are reflecting strong traditions of California patronage such as that extended to Albert Bierstadt by Collis Huntington, to Charles Nahl, by Edward Brian Crocker and to Joseph Sharp and Orin Peck by Phoebe Apperson Hearst. The Shenson family settled in San Francisco in the days of those great philanthropists in the 1880s. And California art patronage is almost a subject almost as interesting and complex as the history of its art itself and Ben and Jess fill a very special place in that tradition. Benn and Jess' support of California art history projects goes far beyond their involvement in the resuscitation of Theodore Wores art career and significance though he is seldom absent. I realized this recently when I was preparing this presentation that my own earliest and serious direct involvement with California art came about through my association with Joseph Baird who I mentioned earlier. That occurred actually when two of Joseph's former students from the University of California at Davis applied and, I might add, were accepted in our Graduate Program in New York. Subsequently Joseph began sending me his own publications on California Art, basic material for anyone interested in the subject. One of the earlier and most significant of these was Baird's Northern California Art and Interpretive Bibliography to 1915, published in 1977 and there on its first page is the acknowledgement "this publication has been made possible by a grant from Drs. Ben and A. Jess Shenson in memory of Mrs. Caroline B. Wores, widow of the California artist, Theodore Wores".

I have spoken here only of their promotion of California art primarily, at least within California itself. With their generosity both in sharing their collection and at times in donating paintings from it to institutions around the United States, they have extended their artistic presence nationwide. Furthermore they have been active supporters in Washington, D.C. and Ben was recently made a member of the Fine Arts Advisory Panel of the Federal Reserve Board and both have been long time members of the Advisory Board of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, almost from its inception in 1981. Having had the pleasure of attending a number of Board Meetings of that Museum in their company, I know first hand how valued and respected their involvement there is. Scholastic education too has enjoyed great support from them. Here in their native town, Jess was on the Board of San Francisco State University President's Advisory Board for most of the 80's and Chairman for three years. Three thousand miles west, both Ben and Jess have served for over 20 years on the Board of the Special Education Center of Oahu and Hawaii. On the country's opposite coast I can speak even more at first-hand of their tremendous generosity in providing my own Graduate Art History Program at the City University with an annual Shenson Fellowship for a matriculating student, this starting in 1978, especially encouraged by their wonderful and generous Mother. This has been of tremendous significance for us, and actually not only in the aid it gives each year to a new deserving student in our Program, but also very frankly in giving me as a fund raiser for our Program an important strategem. In pointing to the distant shores of the Pacific to such support, it makes it somewhat easier to persuade art lovers in our home city of the national significance of our Program and our scholarly efforts. So it is no surprise, of course, that further artistic support is now offered here at the California Historical Society with the Louis and Rose Shenson Art Gallery.

Now I have spoken to you of all of Ben and Jess' great contribution to the world of Art and Art History. I must also mention their tremendous support in the world of Music endeavour which may even outskirt their assistance in the world of Art. Music, and especially the world of opera, is one of several glues that have bonded Ben, Jess and myself together over these many years, beginning back when Jess was on the Metropolitan National Council for a full decade and Chairman of the San Francisco District Metropolitan Opera Auditions for almost as long. On a personal level, their great presence in that world has enabled me and my wife to enjoy coming to know through them a number of my operatic heroines of the recent past, such as Licia Albanese, Bidu Sayao. More specifically I was also finally to meet and get to know Lucine Amara who had been my Aida when I made that memorable Metropolitan Opera debut as that blue skirted spear carrier 21 years ago in what was my first and, by the way, final appearance on the Met. stage. But personal pleasures aside, one of the greatest contributions has been Ben and Jess' sponsorship of the many facets of the Merola Opera Program and essential arm of the San Francisco Opera including the operas training program. They have also sponsored the Adler Fellowship of the opera along with other facets of the musical world here. The Shenson Young Artist Debut series with the San Francisco Symphony, on the Board of which Jess serves which has supported the likes of the great singer, Thomas Hampson, the violinist protege, Midori, and other talented violinists and pianists such as Anne-Sophie Mutter, Annie Chang, Gil Shaham, Joshua Bell, Andrea Lucchisini and Evgeny Kissin. This year they are supporting an entire clutch of five pianists and violinists..... They support the Asian Youth Orchestra and Jess serves too on the Board of the Archives of the Performing Arts Library and Museum in San Francisco, support which, all in all I suspect, is unparalleled. Given the artistic wealth of the California Historical Society, it may be fitting that I present this short address acknowledging the good Doctor's beneficence, but someone from the world of music could and should, far more efficiently and fully than I, recognize the greatness of their contribution in the musical sphere, both in San Francisco and beyond. I can tell you this --- I experience with tremendous pleasure the results of that generosity when I hear the splendid vocal achievements of such marvellous young singers as Ruth Ann Swenson, Dolora Zajick, Thomas Hampson, Ann Panagulias and Hong Shen-Li, along with scores of others for whom the support offered by Ben and Jess has been crucial in their careers.

Of course, I know that their generosity goes beyond the world of culture, and probably in many directions with which I'm unfamiliar and which their inherent modesty has not permitted them to disclose. There is, for instance, I know, the Louis and Rose Shenson Memorial Loan Fund for medical students, and then, starting in 1985, the Visiting Professorship of Clinical Medicine at Stanford University where they trained, and where Ben is on the board of the School of Medicine. And I suspect that that's just the tip of another iceberg of beneficence; there's also their support for the Jewish Home for the Aged, but I really am not privy

to all the ramifications of their altruism. But I would like to conclude and leave you with a thought which embodies also the depth of my respect and affection for Ben and for Jess. Our cultural world, here in the United States, is in considerable difficulties in these days when the nation's economy is both uncertain and in great flux. Nevertheless, we rely heavily on the generosity of a good many individuals who have recognized cultural priorities. Though outstanding in both the breadth and the depth of their generosity, Ben and Jess are not alone in that regard; but where, I find, they are among the few, is in the personal nature of their contributions in art, music and surely much else. When I fund-raise for my University, I am tremendously pleased, of course, when a generous donor responds to my letter of solicitation by having his corporate secretary send a check from his or her foundation. But the sense of individual involvement, the sense of care, this old-time but extremely intimate and touching personal participation, is something far more than a concern for the proper expenditure of their generosity; it's a recognition on their part of the humanistic component of cultural achievement - and true humanists are what Ben and Jess most certainly are.

April, 1995 remarks in connection with the Shenson Award to honor outstanding hospital employees.

THE DOCTORS SHENSON: "DOING A GOOD JOB IS ITS OWN REWARD"

Earlier this year, Saint Francis Memorial Hospital announced the creation of the "Drs. Ben & A. Jess Shenson Award" to honor outstanding Hospital employees. The award was made possible through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Tanenbaum. (She had been a patient under the care of the Shensons.)

How did the two brothers react to having an award named after them? "We were embarrassed," says Ben modestly. Jess pipes in: "Well, first we were honored. Then we were embarrassed."

Modesty is one trademark of the doctors Shenson. Dedication to practicing quality medicine is another.

Both internists with subspecialties in cardiology, the brothers trained at Stanford. Ben obtained his medical degree in 1940 and went on to serve as Chief Resident at San Francisco General Hospital. He stayed on at SF General as an instructor of internal medicine until World War II ended in 1945, when he set up private practice.

Jess earned his M.D. in 1950 and promptly joined Ben in private practice. At first, they practiced in a former Stanford-affiliated hospital at Clay and Webster. "But I soon learned about the quality of patient care at Saint Francis, and as a result, my brother and I began taking all of our patients exclusively to Saint Francis in 1964," Ben recalls. "The quality of care there is a tradition going back at least as far as Orville Booth, who was the administrator when we first went there."

The road to practicing medicine at Saint Francis was an interesting one for the Drs. Shenson. They grew up in the Haight-Ashbury area of San Francisco. Their father, Louis, had been born in San Francisco in 1888. Their mother, Rose, came to the City from New York shortly after the earthquake and fire of 1906. Both boys graduated from Lowell High School, where Jess was a classmate of Carol Channing's. "She still refers to me as 'that fellow who got me through chemistry class,'" Jess chuckles.

Ben's decision to study medicine during the Great Depression of the 1930s was a result of the "process of elimination," he notes. "Our father, who was a merchant, told us the world of business was not what it used to be and that it wouldn't be a good future for us. I had no mechanical ability, so I couldn't be an engineer. My father didn't like lawyers, so that was out. That left two possibilities: either be a doctor or a dentist. I didn't want to stand around all day looking into people's mouths, so I decided to be a physician."

After a bit of good-natured prodding from Jess, Ben adds: "When I was being interviewed for admission to Stanford Medical School, the chief asked me why I wanted to be a doctor. I replied that, first, I wanted to make a living. Second, I didn't want to hurt anyone while I was making a living. Third, I believed that if I was a doctor, everyone would respect me -- and I got into medical school."

(Shensons, page 2)

Jess's motivation, he claims, was far more simple: "I just wanted to follow in my older brother's footsteps. Of course, it was difficult because he set such a standard I could never live up to it. In those days, medical school was very small. The teachers would go down the list for roll call, and when they got to my name they'd ask, 'Oh, are you Ben Shenson's brother?'"

Practicing together over the years, the two brothers have developed lasting relationships with many of their patients. "That's the joy of medicine," says Ben. "In some families, we now have three generations of patients." One 90-year-old patient first came to Ben's office 52 years ago. Another patient has been seeing the doctors Shenson for 44 years. "She'll be celebrating her 101st birthday in April," Jess notes.

Among their many patients have been a number of celebrities, including Don Ameche, Eartha Kitt, Tallulah Bankhead, Deborah Kerr, Rita Hayworth, Tennessee Williams, Cornell Wilde and Burgess Meredith (whose nickname, they claim, is "Buzz").

One of the most notable patients of Ben Shenson was former President Herbert Hoover, a fellow Stanford graduate. "I was living at the back of the Stanford campus in 1935," Ben says. "Every morning as I walked across campus, I would meet Mr. Hoover on his morning stroll. I'd say, 'Good morning, sir.' He would nod and keep on going.

"Years later, after Mr. Hoover returned to Stanford in 1955, the dean of the Stanford Medical School called me to come down to see 'the Chief' -- as he was called," Ben continues. "Mr. Hoover became my patient at that point, and I got to know him very well."

Jess's first famous patient was Carmen Miranda. "She couldn't have been nicer," Jess says. "She was so natural."

Perhaps the most noteworthy patient Jess recalls tending was Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, who came to San Francisco on a state visit in 1951. "He was a very charming gentleman," Jess comments. "I saw him on two occasions. When I left, he handed me a small coin. It turned out to be a 24-karat gold coin that was minted when he was crowned Emperor in 1930. I still have the coin."

Another incident Jess remembers is the time Rex Harrison was in town for a visit. "At that time, he was working in New York doing 'My Fair Lady,' and he came here for a weekend holiday," Jess explains. "He asked me to come see Kay Kendall, who would soon be his wife. He said, 'I would deeply appreciate it if you would kindly come over.' So I went. I rang the doorbell, and he answered the door.

(Shensons, page 3)

"A few months later, Ben was planning to attend a medical meeting in New York," Jess adds. "Ben couldn't get any tickets to 'My Fair Lady,' so we wrote Rex Harrison a letter, enclosing a check and asking for his assistance. Ben got two house seats -- fifth row, center. Seated close to him on the aisle were the Duke and Duchess of Windsor."

Recent celebrity patients of the doctors Shenson were Carroll ("Archie") O'Connor, who was hospitalized at Saint Francis, and Melanie Griffith, who came to the doctors' office. Ben blushes and admits, "At first, I didn't know who she was."

The list of famous patients goes on and on. "We could write a book that really would be very interesting," Ben says. "We feel that would be an invasion of these people's privacy, though. We'll give you names, but we won't tell you why we saw them."

The two doctors also have treated many patients who are noted musicians from the opera or symphony, which seems only natural since the Shensons have sponsored and supported various performers for decades. Their parents introduced Ben to piano lessons at age 5, and Jess was the same age when he first attended an opera. They have maintained a love of music ever since.

One of their primary beneficiaries is the Merola Opera Program, which has trained such noted young performers as Ellen Kerrigan, Ann Panagulias and Hong-Shen Li. Through the Shenson Young Artists program, they have sponsored brilliant instrumentalists such as Anne-Sophie Mutter, Medori, and Annie Chang. The brothers also are the "godfathers" of the Asian Youth Symphony, a group of 100 talented instrumentalists between the ages of 12 and 24 from all over Asia, including China, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and South Korea.

"Our life has always been full of music," says Ben, who traveled around the world at age 18 playing piano with a four-piece band on a cruise ship. "I can't imagine what our life would be like without music."

The Shensons' parents also introduced them to art at an early age, and the family collection is extensive. Currently, they specialize in collecting works by American artist Theodore Wores (1859-1939), and they have donated 26 Wores paintings to the permanent collection at Saint Francis Memorial Hospital. Among the paintings at Saint Francis are such California scenes as Cathedral Rock, Yosemite Valley and Merced River; Mt. Tamalpais from Greenbrae; Flora of the Sand Dunes, San Francisco; and Garden at Montalvo: Senator Phelan's Home Near Saratoga. They also donated some Wores works from Spain, including Ancient Moorish Mill, Alcala de Guadaira.

(Shensons, page 4)

They began collecting the artist's work somewhat by chance, Jess explains. "After our father died in 1950 at age 62, our mother became very close friends with Theodore Wores' widow, Carolyn," he says. "She lived a few blocks away, and she looked at Ben and me as her children, also, because she had no children of her own. Over the years, she would occasionally give us a painting as a present for a birthday or Christmas. Later on, we became more active in collecting his paintings on our own."

The Shensons just recently purchased a Wores painting in New York, this time one of his portraits of Native Americans painted while he lived in Taos, New Mexico. Many of the Shensons' collection of paintings have been lent out for various exhibits around the world. Three Wores paintings from the Shenson collection were donated to the White House, where they currently are on display.

"We keep a few special paintings at home," Jess says. "Home" is the first house to be constructed on Nob Hill after the 1906 earthquake. The doctors Shensons shared this home with their mother until her death at age 90 in 1983. Neither brother ever married, they claim, because they were too busy practicing medicine. By all accounts, they practice it well.

"I've never really considered myself a humanitarian," Ben notes, "but I think I've practiced good medicine. I've never thought about anything but doing a good job. I once had a teacher who said, 'Never worry about the fee. Do a good job and the fee will take care of itself.' I've never forgotten that."

"I think that's the way Jess and I have always practiced medicine," Ben adds. "Doing a good job is the best remuneration you can get."

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 26, 1995

Dr. Jess Shenson
450 Sutter Street
San Francisco, California 94108

Dear Jess:

Thank you so much for your generous donation of Theodore Wores' "Iris Garden, Hori-Kiri, Tokyo." I will be proud to present this beautiful painting as a gift from the United States government to the Emperor and Empress of Japan when Hillary and I visit Tokyo.

Hillary and I send our best holiday wishes and our gratitude for your exceptional act of kindness.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

Invitation to and remarks by Rabbi Stephen S. Pearce at a memorial concert for Dr. Ben Shenson, Sunday, December 14, 1997.

You Are Cordially Invited
to

An Evening of Music

in Memory of
Dr. Ben Shenson

Featuring
The Alexander String Quartet
The San Francisco Boys Choir
Cantor Roslyn Barak
Marc Shapiro, Pianist
Roger Wiesmeyer, Oboist
Howard Na, Pianist
Other Artists TBA

Sunday, December 14, 1997, 7:30 PM

Dessert Reception to Follow

Martin Meyer Sanctuary, Temple Emanu-El
Arguello Blvd. at Lake Street, San Francisco

No admission charge. Seating is limited
Reservations are requested
RSVP number of guests to
415/751-2541 Ext. 49 by December 9th

This event is made possible by
the Drs. Ben and A. Jess Shenson Music Endowment Fund
of The Congregation Emanu-El

Historical Highlights: Remembering Dr. Ben Shenson

(This is the sixteenth in a series of articles about Congregation Emanu-El's history edited by Rabbi Stephen S. Pearce)

It is not possible to speak of Dr. Ben Shenson without mentioning his brother Dr. A. Jess Shenson in the same breath. For decades, this dynamic duo has been a fixture not only in the spiritual, cultural and musical life of Congregation Emanu-El, but in virtually every philanthropic enterprise in Northern California as well as select eleemosynary institutions in the U.S. They have been constants on the cultural and social scene. Like their parents before them, they have been generous patrons of the arts, always mindful of their father's advice: "To give while you are living is golden".

Native San Franciscans, the Shenson brothers are both graduates of Lowell High School and Stanford Medical School. Their list of scientific awards and affiliations serves as a reminder of distinguished medical careers that together span an entire century. Their careers represent a kind of folksy, down-home medical service that is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Not long ago, Ben lamented the changes that have overtaken the medical profession: "We're living in a society that's completely different. Everybody wants to sue everybody and the patients know how to treat everything, even what tests to order. It's not a profession anymore, it's a business". The Shenson brothers have had occasion to treat not only ordinary people but also the rich and famous by virtue of being on call for one of the prominent downtown hotels for many years.

In addition to service on art, symphony and opera boards, they created a wide variety of funds and scholarships to help young artists and students including: the Louis and Rose Shenson Memorial Loan Fund at Stanford University Medical School, the Shenson Visiting Professorship in Clinical Medicine at Stanford by outstanding internists, the Shenson Young Artists Debut Fund at the San Francisco Symphony, The Rose Shenson Scholarship Fund which sponsors two participants in the Merola Opera Program, The Rose and Louis Shenson Research Room at the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum, The Shenson Scholarship Fund in Art History at The City University of New York, The Louis and Rose Shenson Fund at the Jewish Home for the Aged. At Congregation Emanu-El, the Shenson Music Fund sponsors concerts and provided a major overhaul of our Skinner Organ, the console of which was replaced through their generosity. Last year, Temple members Charles and Mary Tanenbaum established the Shenson Excellence Through Caring Awards at Saint Francis Hospital to recognize outstanding hospital employees. Charles Tanenbaum paid tribute to the Shensons with this encomium: "The Shensons are like bamboo shoots. They grow underground - out of sight - then spring up everywhere".

A visit to the Shenson home atop Nob Hill, purchased in 1953, is a rare treat, not only because of the deep love that Ben and Jess shared for this gracious home with a breathtaking bridge-to-bridge view, but also because of the art treasures, furnishings, jade, cloisonne, tapestries, paintings and celadon pottery that make their home a feast for the eyes..

Ben and Jess' interest in oriental art is not only intuitive but inherited. Their grandfather came to San Francisco from Russia in 1882 and established a kosher meat business in which their father was also involved. Their father became acquainted with two men who were importing sausage casings, as well as art from Shanghai. A friendship resulted in a partnership that ultimately supplied oriental art to the great emporiums of that day - Gumps, Nathan-Dohrmann and Marsh's.

The Shenson brothers are single handedly responsible for the revival and preservation of the work of San Francisco artist Theodore Wores whose widow, Carrie, was a friend of their mother. Over the years, the Shensons have acquired every Wores painting they could find, sponsored traveling shows of Wores works and have given collections to major institutions so that they could be enjoyed by the public in succeeding generations. Recently President Clinton presented a Theodore Wores painting of a Japanese scene to the Emperor of Japan which was given by Jess as a gift to the State Department. The White House has also been the recipient of three paintings which President Nixon gratefully accepted to grace the walls of the West Wing. A month before Ben Shenson died, I sat with him in his living room-cum-museum. He marvelled at the exquisite beauty of a Ch'ing dynasty jade statue of a man holding a chain; the entire work had been fashioned from a solid, unbroken piece of jade. He spoke of reprimanding a friend whose beautiful collection of oriental art was kept locked in vaults far away from the public eye. Ben looked me in the eye and said quite emphatically, "Art is meant to be enjoyed. I told that man that he was sinning by not sharing his collection with others".

Both Jess and Ben Shenson have touched the lives of so many people. Their charitable and kind acts of philanthropy continue to give and serve as a fitting memorial to Ben whose life is a tribute of service to other human beings. Those of us who knew Ben personally feel privileged to have had his friendship and affection. May his memory continue to serve as a blessing!

Participants of the Rose Shenson Opera
Scholarship Fund, Merola Opera Program:

SHENSON YOUNG ARTISTS:

1977	Nalti Henigman	1988	Cynthia Jacoby Hong-Shen Li	1987	Viktoria Mullova
1978	ETIen Kerrigan	1989	Mary Mills Hans Choi	1987	Emile Naoumoff
1979	Mary Abajian	1990	Timothy Sarris Zheng Zhau	1988	Midori Anne-Sophie Mutter
1980	Leslie Richards	1991	Man-Hua Gao Zheng Zhau	1989	Mitsuko Shirai/Hartmut Holl Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg
1981	Ruth Golden	1992	Richard Nickol James Caputo	1989	Annie Chang Matt Haimovitz Olaf Baer
1982	James Bustarud	1993	Elizabeth Grohowski Claudia Waite	1990	Andrea Lucchesini Dang Thai Son
1983	Cherryl Parrish	1994	Richard Nickol James Caputo	1991	Gil Shaham Joshua Bell Evgeny Kissin Gary Hoffman
1984	Rachel Rosales	1995	Elizabeth Grohowski Claudia Waite	1992	Thomas Hampson Santiago Rodriguez Helene Grimaud Alexander Sntarkman
1985	Karen Wickland White Eagle	1996	Sari Gruber Norah Amsellam	1993	Sarah Chang Awadagin Pratt Evelyn Glennie Ming Chiel Lui Chee-Yun
1986	Michael Rees Davis Ann Panagulias	1997	Sari Gruber Norah Amsellam	1994	Corey Cerovsek Valery Kuleshov Benjamin Pasternak Daniel Gaisford
1987	Cynthia Jacoby Hong-Shen Li	1998	Anita Johnson; Kamel Boustros	1995	Gustavo Romero Arje Weithaas Leila Josefowicz Fabio Bidini Michelle DeYoung Bryn Terfel Andrea Haefliger Nikolai Lugansky James Westman

Participants of the Rose Shenson Opera
Scholarship Fund, the Merola Opera Program,
1977-1997; Shenson Young Artists, sponsored
through San Francisco Performances, San
Francisco Symphony, and Cal Performances,
1987-1997.

Theodore Wores

(1859–1939)

Paintings from California to Japan

April 11 through June 13, 1998



FIG. 1 *Golden Gate: Land's End, San Francisco*, 1914, oil on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

RENNED AS ONE OF THE FIRST American painters to live in Japan and to record the appearance and customs of the Japanese people, Theodore Wores was, in fact, an artist of widely varied talents as well as a figure of the foremost significance in the art-life of northern California. In addition to his art, which evolved from his early Munich-inspired style to strong reflections of the Impressionist strategies so prevalent at the turn of the century, Wores was one of San Francisco's most important art teachers in the early twentieth

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FIG. 2 *Wisteria at the Temple Garden of Kameido, Tokyo*, ca. 1892–1896, oil on board, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches

FIG. 3 *A Japanese Flirtation (A Question), Ikao, Japan*, ca. 1892–1896, oil on panel, 15 × 12 inches

century. And, while San Francisco always remained Wores's base, he constantly sought inspiration in Europe and Japan as well as in the islands of the Pacific.

Wores was among the first native-born San Francisco painters. He studied there initially in the early 1870s under Joseph Harrington, and in 1874, he became one of the two earliest pupils to enroll at the newly-founded San Francisco Academy of Design, studying under Virgil Williams. The following year, several of Wores's drawings were sent abroad to Toby Rosenthal, an important San Francisco figurative artist who had expatriated to Munich in 1865. Rosenthal urged Wores to join him in Munich. There Wores became his pupil and also enrolled at the Munich Royal Academy, studying life drawing under Ludwig Loefftz and oil painting under Alexander Wagner; he won bronze medals for his work in both classes. In Munich, Wores enjoyed the camaraderie of other San Francisco art students including Henry Raschen, Joseph Strong, and Thad Welch. Like so many American artists who trained in Munich in the 1870s, Wores came under the influence of Frank Duveneck, becoming one of the Duveneck "boys" who followed their mentor to Italy late in 1879. The boys met James McNeill Whistler in Venice in 1880, and the impact of this encounter was especially strong upon Wores, for Whistler encouraged Wores to visit and explore Japan.

First, however, Wores returned to San Francisco in 1881. There he was hailed as a second Toby Rosenthal (albeit one who had rejoined the local art community) and he established a studio next to that of the city's leading landscape painter, William Keith. Wores painted in San Francisco for the next four years, becoming one of the first local artists to devote much of his talents to depicting the Chinese community, the most distinct of the local ethnic enclaves. Some of the artist's finest

paintings of this period capture the customs, costumes, occupations, buildings, and pastimes of the Chinese; in 1882 he began to illustrate articles on the community, and later he would publish his own writings on the subject.

Contemporary interest in all things Japanese—which had received tremendous impetus at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876—coupled with the urgings of Whistler, underscored Wores's decision to travel to Japan. Arriving in Yokohama in March of 1885, the artist utilized the academic training he had received in Munich to paint not only the distinctive scenery of the country, but also the Japanese people in their native environment. Securing a house in the village of Kanesugiyama, outside of Tokyo, Wores melded with the local populace as had few other foreigners. In November of 1887, just before his departure, the Japanese government arranged for an exhibition of his Japanese paintings in Tokyo.

Soon after his return to the United States in December, Wores began to establish an international reputation with the exhibition of his Japanese images in San Francisco, New York, Boston, Chicago, and Washington, D. C. The next fall, Wores moved to New York, establishing a studio in the famous Tenth Street Studio Building next to that of William Merritt Chase.

In 1892, Wores returned to Japan. During a stay that lasted almost two years, he replenished his stock of imagery in Tokyo, Ikao, Kyoto, Sugita, and Kamakura, and again enjoyed a one-artist exhibition, this time in Yokohama. He continued to produce Japanese views even after his return to San Francisco in 1894 as well as after a temporary return to New York in the same year. While in New York, he rented a space in the Carnegie Hall Studio Building and exhibited his Japanese pictures at Knoedler Galleries and at the National Academy of Design from 1895 to 1897. In October 1900, a critic for the *Art Interchange* noted that,

"To the Eastern mind Mr. Theodore Wores has become identified as the portrayer of things Japanese."¹

During the 1890s, Wores published almost a dozen articles on Japanese life, artists, flower arrangements, and gardens. These subjects also constituted some of his finest pictorial themes; in many works, he expressed the beauty of Japanese gardens and flowering trees, while also conveying his fascination and respect for monuments dedicated to Japanese religious life, as may be seen in *Wisteria at the Temple Garden of Kameido, Tokyo* (fig. 2). Distinctive Japanese architecture, both in building and bridge forms, captivated Wores also, along with the country's most unique natural features. These attractions are eloquently rendered in such figural works as *Mount Fujiyama, from Yokohama, Japan* (1895) and in the expressive narrative of *A Japanese Flirtation (A Question), Ikaō, Japan* (fig. 3). Plein-air studies constitute many of his smaller pictures from the late 1880s and early 1890s. Beginning with his Japanese pictures, Wores combined his Munich-derived facility with paint and brushwork with his new interest in rich coloration and the recording of brilliant effects of sunlight. As one London critic noted on reviewing Wores's exhibition at the Dowdeswell Galleries in June of 1889, "Sunshine is Mr. Wores' strong point."²

Through relative proximity as well as immigration, San Francisco Bay area artists were naturally drawn to the exploration of the cultures and peoples of the Pacific, both those of mainland Asia and the Oceanic Islands. Wores's next major trip took place in 1901–1902, when he traveled to Samoa and Hawaii, islands which had been visited and recorded by American artists as early as the arrival of the Wilkes exploratory expedition of 1838. More immediately, Wores had been preceded in the islands by San Francisco's Joseph Strong, who visited in the 1880s, and by John La Farge, who visited in 1890.

In Samoa, as in Japan, Wores painted both the native inhabitants including *Making Kava, Samoa* (fig. 4) and scenes



FIG. 4 *Making Kava, Samoa*, ca. 1901–1903, oil on canvas, 20 × 24 inches

revealing island buildings and lifestyles, as in *Samoan Huts* (1903). Distinct from his images of elegantly robed Japanese women, Wores's Samoan works depict semi-nude figures while also detailing the characteristic features of both the tropical environment and the native architecture of the island. These features were equally true of Wores's presentation of his Hawaiian subjects, especially those which document native occupations such as *The Lei Maker* (1901; Honolulu Academy of Arts), which has become the most renowned of all of Wores's paintings, holding the role, at least unofficially, as the island-state's national image. In April of 1902, Wores had a well-received exhibition of his Hawaiian and Samoan paintings in Honolulu, of which one critic noted "The difference, subtle, yet distinct in the coloring of Hawaiian and Samoan landscapes, also reveals the ability of Mr. Wores to catch local color promptly and infallibly."³ Wores also exhibited with the first Hawaiian art organization, the Kilohana Art League, and made a return visit to the islands in 1910 on a honeymoon with his new wife, the former Carolyn Bauer, at which time another exhibition of his paintings was held in Honolulu.

Wores's next major journey, in 1903, took him to Spain, which had been attracting American artists since the late 1860s and early '70s, when Thomas Eakins, Mary Cassatt, and other painters traveled there. Like other artists visiting the country, Wores went to Madrid to study the techniques of Velásquez and spent time in Seville, but he concentrated mostly on scenes in Alcalá and especially in Granada, creating works such as his *Walls and Garden in the Alhambra, Granada, Spain* (fig. 5). The paintings from this journey received glowing reviews upon their exhibition at the Century Association in New York in February of 1904. Unlike the subjects he explored and depicted during his earlier travels, Wores's choices in Spanish subject matter inaugurated his concentration upon landscape. And, concomitant with this focus, Wores adopted even more the colorful and light-filled strategies of Impressionism, complete with scintillating and broken brushwork.



FIG. 5 *Walls and Garden in the Alhambra, Granada, Spain*, 1903, oil on board, 9 × 12 inches

On his return to San Francisco in 1905, Wores began to concentrate on rendering Western scenery, both in the immediate neighborhood of San Francisco and more generally traveling to Santa Barbara, where he painted beach and cliff scenes as well as the famous mission there. In 1913, he worked in the Canadian Rockies, and from 1915 to 1917, he depicted the American Southwest. In these regions he turned to images of the Native American, which led to an impressive series now housed in the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. Like most Bay Area artists, Wores was devastated by the San Francisco earthquake and fire, which destroyed his home and downtown studio and resulted in the loss of much of his earlier work. However, he remained devoted to his native city, and was noted as one of the first artists to return to San Francisco following the disaster.

Beginning about 1911–1912, Wores became one of the group of California painters who specialized in painting the glorious fields of wildflowers growing throughout the state, which were collectively known as the "Flora of the San Francisco Sand Dunes." Unlike his colleagues—among them Granville Redmond, John Gamble, and William F. Jackson—Wores usually captured a distinct sense of place in his images of blossoming landscapes, concentrating on the shoreline in and around San Francisco, as in *Golden Gate: Land's End, San Francisco* (fig. 1). Although native flowers were usually his uppermost concern, Wores also delighted in painting views along the Pacific Coast and sites between the ocean and San Francisco Bay.

Wores also depicted the characteristic California landscape subjects painted by both resident and visiting artists, such as old Spanish missions, groves of eucalyptus trees, giant redwood forests, and the magnificent mountain scenery of Yosemite. Beginning in 1918, he devoted a great deal of time to the blossoming fruit trees which covered the hills and valleys around Los Gatos and Saratoga, south of San Francisco. These works were called his "Spring Blossom Scenes of California" when



FIG. 6 *Prune Blossoms, Saratoga, California*, 1937, oil on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

they were exhibited at the Bohemian Club in San Francisco in October of 1920.

In 1926, Wores and his wife Carrie remodeled an abandoned Methodist church in Saratoga, which became a home and studio. It was in the paintings Wores created there and among the fruit and almond trees in the orchards of the Santa Clara valley, as shown in *Prune Blossoms, Saratoga, California* (fig. 6), that the artist's association with Impressionism found its fullest expression. At the same time, these works hark back to his delight in the rendering of the cherry, plum, and peach trees of Japan.

Indeed, the full extent of Wores's involvement with the depiction of the California landscape may come as a surprise to many who so closely associate his painting with his investigation of foreign lands, above all Japan. But Wores was firmly a San Francisco artist. Among his patrons were the city's leading collectors, the Crockers, the de Youngs, the Hearsts, and the Stanfords. He was a constant exhibitor in local exhibitions and a major teacher. He was the first instructor at the newly formed San Francisco Art Students League in 1884 where he taught life and portrait classes, while also introducing a sketch class. And in 1907, the year after the great natural disaster, he was named dean of the San Francisco Art Institute, the former School of Design and the most prestigious art school west of the Mississippi, a position he held for six years. There, as in his own art, Wores exerted a powerful influence on the course of California painting in the early years of the twentieth century.

William H. Gerdts

Graduate School of the City University of New York



Eucalyptus Trees, ca. early 1930s, oil on canvas, 18 x 23 inches

1. *Art Interchange* 44 (October 1900), p. 93.

2. *Land and Water* (London), June 29, 1889, p. 4.

3. "South Sea Canvases," *Hawaiian Star*, April 10, 1902.

A FAMILY PORTRAIT



*Ben and Jess Shenson with their parents,
Rose and Louis Shenson at Yosemite*



Ben Shenson, 3 years old



Ben Shenson, 6 years old



*Jess and Ben Shenson
10 and 15 years old*



*Ben and Jess Shenson
8 and 3 years old*



*Jess Shenson when he
applied for privileges
at SFMII*



*Ben Shenson
Microbiology lab, 1935*

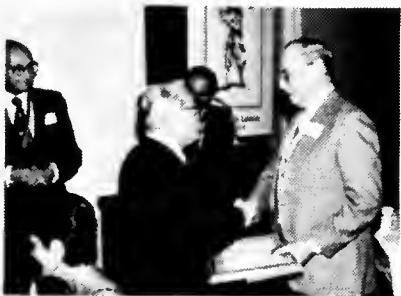


*Ben Shenson, 2nd row, 3rd from left
Stanford Medical School class of 1940*



Jess and Ben Shenson, 1991

DISTINGUISHED CAREERS



*Vincent R. Pennisi, M.D. & Ben Shenson
Saint Francis Day, 1982*



*Bill Inerman & Jess Shenson
Saint Francis Day, 1982*



*Ben Shenson, Marc Tenenbaum,
Jess Shenson & Charles Tenenbaum
Shenson Awards Ceremony, 1995*



*Sammy Smith, Jess & Ben Shenson
Tokyo, 1991*



*Ben Shenson, Berdene Frankel, M.D.
and Jess Shenson
Festival of the Arts, May 1993*



*Ben Shenson, Peter Musto,
Pam Levine & Jess Shenson
Saint Francis Wall of Honor, 1994*



*Ben Shenson, Peter Musto,
Pam Levine & Jess Shenson
Saint Francis Wall of Honor, 1994*



*Jess Shenson
Al Shumate, M.D.
Ben Shenson*



*Ben & Jess Shenson receiving Stanford Medical
Alumni Association Distinguished Service Award
from Dean David Korn, 1994*



*Ben & Jess Shenson
established Shenson-Elshbach Scholarship
Stanford Medical School*



*Ben Shenson, Esther Schonman
and Jess Shenson
Saint Francis Benefactor Dinner, 1994*



*Jess Shenson, Victor Richards, M.D.,
Dean Korn & Ben Shenson*



*Ben & Jess Shenson
Shenson Award Ceremony
July 27, 1992*



Jess Shenson & Sheldon Cable, M.D., 1984



Met Audition 1978
Terri, Carol, Frank
Sherman Award winners



Ben Sherman, Malon, Terri Sherman



Met Audition 1979
John Male, Francisco, Barry
Miller, Benjamin Lancaster & Edith



1978 Merola Membership Party
at Powell Ranch
Terri Sherman, Ellen Terryman



Terri Sherman, Ben Sherman
Thomas Hammann



Interlochen in 1976
Carol, Terri, Mrs. Carol, Jim
Miller, Sherman Poster Ambassador later



Opening of the Sherman Research Room
Performing Arts Library
and Museum



Terri, Lady David, Terri Sherman



1982 Merola Grand Prize
Carlton, Harriet, Terri
Pryor, Quince, Sherman



Ben Sherman, Joshua Bell, Terri Sherman



Opera House Exhibit 1972
Ben Stinson Bert Lindholm



1961 Metropolitan Opera Opening
Rox Stinson Mrs. Horos
Luia Alfonso Mrs. Stinson



Margie
Carlson Tess
Sorenson Rue
Sorenson



Ben Mrs. George Tess
Stinson Aristedus Stinson



Tess Stinson Ben Stinson
President George Bush



Honolulu Academy of Arts
Mendore Wiers The Lei Maker
Dr. Simpson George Ellis
Ben Stinson Mr. Simpson
Mrs. Petty Eric Shima Lee
Tess Stinson Mr. Huenemann



Lowell High School Class of '38
George Lori Del
Matthews Franklin Clark Bennett
Tess
Ross Jernack
Jean Humphrey Hermin Hall Smith Viscach
1938 Carol Ben
Sorenson Chauvin Sorenson

IN SUPPORT OF THE ARTS



Sally Billinghurst, Ben Shenson,
Ruth Ell
Festival of the Arts, 1991



Jess Shenson, Kathleen Kelly
Hector Vasquez, Helen Kerrigan
and Ben Shenson
Festival of the Arts, 1994



Jess Shenson, former Secretary
Christine Ridder, Mayor
Morgan Avenue Meeting, 1992



Jess Shenson, Roberta Cook
Rose Shenson, Ben Shenson, 1982



Jess Shenson and Tom
Tom of Holland Nelson, 1992



Joachim Bechtold, Peter Pratt
Jess Shenson, Nancy Bechtold
Ben Shenson & Agnes Albert
Festival of the Arts, 1993



Ben Shenson, Little Ben
and Jess Shenson
National Women's Show, 1992



Louise M. Davies, Jess Shenson, Mary Louise Pratt,
Helen Hayes at Gordon Getty's home, 1988



Jess Shenson
Thomas Hampson
Ben Shenson



Jess & Ben Shenson, Nancy Bechtold & Von Galt
Opening of Art and Gordon Getty's music room

INDEX--A. Jess Shenson, M.D.

Adair, Bill, 50, 59
 Adler, Kurt Herbert, 102-104,
 112, 114, 146
 Albanese, Licia, 119, 144, 145
 Albert, Agnes, 5
 Allied Arts Club, 88
 Allison, Frances, 140
 American College of Physicians,
 90
 American Medical Association, 89
 Art Association School of Design,
 36
Asahi Shimbun, 56-57
 Asian Youth Orchestra, 126-131
 Aw Sian, Sally, 126-127

Baker, Sam, 5, 20
 Baird, Dr. Joseph, 32, 34, 93
 Barnett, Dr. George, 27, 72, 75
 Bauer, Schweitzer Malthouse, 29
 Berman, Irving, 12
 Beale, Mrs. Truxton (Oge), 40-41
 Bercut Brothers Market, 5
 Berkson, Seymour, 32
 Biddle, James, 41
 Bishop Museum (Honolulu), 56
 Bladen, Barbara, 117
 Blair House, 35
 Bloomfield, Dr. Arthur, 75-76
 Boggs, Mae Helene Bacon, 93-98
 Bohemian Club, 39
 Boskowitz, Dr. George, 62, 83
 Brandt, Hans, 33, 88
 Bray, "Momma" and "Daddy," 69

 Cal Performances, 123
 California Academy of Medicine,
 90
 California Historical Society,
 35, 42
 Channing, Carol, 21-22, 42
 Chitester, Drew, 97
 Christopher, Mayor George, 153

Claire, Elizabeth, 44
 Clinton, President William, 59-60
 Cohen, Ted, 48
 Cole, Robert, 123
 Commanday, Robert, 117
 Conger, Clement, 50-53, 143
 Costa, Mary, 148
 Crocker School, 11

Depression, the, 18
 de Young Museum, 11, 143
 Dunn, Allen, 37
 Duveneck Boys, 37, 45

Eagle Market, 20
 East-West Center (Honolulu), 39-
 40
 Ellis, George, 57
 Ellis Island, 34
 Eloesser, Dr. Leo, 75
 Eu, Edward, 139

Federal Reserve Board Art Advisory
 Committee, 149
 Felt, Ruth, 122
 Ferbrache, Lewis, 32, 44
 Fillmore Street (San Francisco),
 5-6
 French Hospital, 76

Garland, Dr. Harry, 82
 Gerdts, Dr. William, 42, 50, 55
 Gerbode, Dr. Frank, 74-75
 Gould, Charles, 32, 33
 Gover, Mary, 92
 Gump's department store, 13, 16,
 51

Haight-Ashbury, 11, 141
 Hampson, Thomas, 106

Harrison, Rex, 80-81
 Hartley, Russell, 116
 Hebrew Free Loan Association, 26
 Hebrew Union College, 150
 Hogg, Betty, 32
 Holladay, Mr. and Mrs. Wallace, 150
 Honolulu Academy of the Arts, 55, 57, 58, 61, 150
 Hoover, President Herbert, 64, 67, 78-79
 Howell, Warren, 94
 I. Shainin and Company, 12-16, 132

Jackson, Kay, 50

Kalman, Eddie, 15
 Kennedy Galleries, 54
 Kerrigan, Ellen, 111-112, 149
 Kissinger, Henry, 143-144
 Kneseth Israel Congregation, 2
 Knoedler Gallery, 44
 kosher process, the, 6

Levin, Bud, 154
 Levin, Irma, 3-28, 154
 Los Angeles County Museum, 35
 Lowell High School, 3, 10, 20-22

Ma, Yo-Yo, 129
 Mark Hopkins Hotel, 37, 79-81
 MacArthur, General Douglas, 69
 McEwen, Terry, 108-109
 McKelvy, Frank, 67, 136
 Menuhin, Yehudi, 24-25, 129, 136, 154
 Merola, Gaetano, 102

Merola Opera Program
 Adler Fellows, 108
 Affiliate Artists Program, 109
 board of directors, 115-116, 148-149
 Metropolitan Museum, 35, 54
 Metropolitan Opera, 110
 Mihailoff, Sergei, 14, 22
 military service (U.S. Army, 96th Division), 67
 Miranda, Carmen, 79
 Montgomery Street art studios, 31
 Morgan, Robert, 33-34
 Mutter, Anne Sophie, 121
My Playhouse was a Concord Coach, 94-96

Nathan Dohrman department store, 13, 14, 19
 National Museum of American Arts, 35, 44-45
 National Museum of Women in the Arts, 54, 150
 National Trust for Historic Preservation, 35, 40, 51
 Neubert, George, 47
 Nixon, President Richard, 52-53

Palace Hotel, 15
 Panagulias, Ann, 113
 Performing Arts Library and Museum, 116-118
 Petit Trianon, 25
Physicians Desk Reference, 83
 Piallat, Alain and Jacquey, 151-152
 Pontzious, Richard, 126-131, 146

Quick, Michael, 50

religion, 6-7, 11, 17, 26
 Richards, Herbert, 97
 Richards, Dr. Victor, 75, 79
 Rosenblatt, Martin, 13

Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund, 125-126

Rosenberg, Mary Louise (Schwabacher), 101

Rosenthal, Toby, 36

Ruskin, John, 37

St. Francis Hospital, San Francisco, 45, 83-84

San Francisco Film Festival, 153-154

San Francisco Opera, 118-119

Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund, 125-126

San Francisco Symphony

Shenson Young Artists Debut Fund, 120-123

Youth Orchestra, 125-126

San Francisco Performances, 122

Saratoga, artists' center, 34

Schwabacher, James, 101

Selassie, Haile, Emperor, 80

Shasta Museum, 94-96

Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 114, 146

Shenson, Aaron, 2-5, 26

Shenson, Dr. Ben, 2, 8-10, 18, 20-23, 27-33, 42-48, 52, 57, 62-67, 74, 76, 78-92, 95-100, 149, 151-156

Shenson, Fanny, 3

Shenson, Irma (Levin), 3-27, 154

Shenson, Jesse (Shy), 4-8, 12-14, 20

Shenson, Joseph, 4, 5, 8, 18, 20

Shenson, Lilly, 3

Shenson, Louis, 3-12, 16-20, 16, 62-63, 98, 156

Shenson, Robert, 3, 5

Shenson, Rose, 1-2, 7-8, 14, 16-18, 22, 24, 26, 29, 30, 41, 42, 54, 48-52, 86, 88, 100, 112, 116, 133, 143, 153-156

San Francisco Call Bulletin, 24

Chinatown, 37

earthquake, 1906, 7, 39

emergency medical services, 78

San Francisco Examiner, 33

San Francisco Yacht Club, 99-100

Scouten, Rex, 53-54

Selassie, Haile, Emperor, 80

Shipman, Herbert, 57

Shumway, Dr. Norman, 74

Smith, Dr. Reginald, 76-77

Stanford University

Museum, 65-66

undergraduate studies, 63-66

Stanford University Medical School

Ben Shenson Society, 66

at County Hospital, 63, 72-75, 78

music scholarships, 67

Shenson Visiting Professorship, 64-66

Stanford Lane Hospital, 72

Stevenson, Robert Louis, 39

Tan Dun, 129

Tanenbaum, Charles and Mary, 145

Temple Emanu-El

Shenson Music Endowment Fund, 148

Terfel, Bryn, 123-124

Terwilliger, Dr. Kenneth, 14

Thompson, Jim, 135

travels, 132-154

art tours in Switzerland, London, Brussels, Scotland, Provence, 151-152

China, 135, 141-142, 146-147, 154

Hawaii, 137, 139-141

Japan, 136

Tripler Hospital, 71

Triton Museum, 33, 51

Victor, Lizzie, 55, 57

Western Opera Theater, 107-108

Westman, James, 104

Whistler, James, 37-38

White House, 52-53

Wilbur, Dr. Dwight, 64, 75

Wilbur, Dr. Ray Lyman, 75
Wilde, Oscar, 38
Woman's Athletic Club of San
Francisco, 95
Wores, Carrie, 28-31, 34, 41-43,
47, 48, 52
Wores, Theodore
 Blossom Period, 34, 51
 Chinese paintings, 37, 44, 48
 early years, 36-42
 Japanese Paintings, 37-38, 46-
 48
 placement of paintings, 44-46,
 55-61
 portraits, 40-42
 studies, 37-39, 46-47
 touring exhibitions, 34-35

Zajic, Dolora, 111
Zen, Thelma, 139-140
Zheng Zhau, 114

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